

Raymond Carver • Stephen Dixon • Bobbie Ann Mason

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

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Drue Heinz Literature Prize

RULES FOR ENTRY

The University of Pittsburgh Press and the Howard Heinz Endowment announce the fourth Drue Heinz Literature Prize for a collection of short fiction to be published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. The winner will be announced during January 1984, and will receive a cash award of \$5,000 and publication by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 1984 under its standard royalty contract.

Eligibility

1. The award is open to writers who have published book-length collections of fiction or a minimum of three short stories or novellas in commercial magazines or literary journals of national distribution.
2. The award is open to writers in English, whether or not they are citizens of the United States.
3. Translations are not eligible, unless they are translations into English done by the author himself or herself.
4. Submissions should consist of a manuscript of short stories, one or more novellas (for the purpose of this award we define a novella as a longer piece of fiction, no more than 150 double-spaced typed pages), or a combination of one or more novellas and short stories.
5. Work previously published in book form as a collection of fiction solely by the author is not eligible.
6. Stories or novellas previously published in book form as part of an anthology of fiction are eligible.

Format for Submissions

1. Manuscripts should be typed double-spaced on good-quality white paper, and pages should be numbered consecutively.
2. Manuscripts should be no fewer than 150 and no more than 300 typescript pages.
3. Each manuscript should be accompanied by a list of the writer's published work.
4. Xerox copies are acceptable if readily legible and printed on good-quality white (not gray) paper.
5. Each manuscript should have a cover page listing the title of the collection and the author's name, address, and

telephone number; *the author's name should not appear elsewhere on the manuscript.*

6. Each manuscript must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope or book-mailer large enough to accommodate the manuscript; otherwise, the manuscript cannot be returned.

Multiple Submissions

1. Authors may submit manuscripts sent to the Press to other publishers while the manuscripts are with us; please notify the Press immediately if a manuscript submitted for the Prize has been accepted for publication elsewhere.
2. Authors may submit more than one manuscript to the Drue Heinz competition so long as each meets all eligibility requirements, and one manuscript, or a portion thereof, does not duplicate material submitted to us in another manuscript.

Dates for Submission

1. Manuscripts should be mailed *only during July and August*, and in any event must be postmarked not later than August 31.
2. Manuscripts received before July cannot be acknowledged; manuscripts postmarked later than August 31 will be returned unread.
3. Send manuscripts to: Drue Heinz Literature Prize, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.
4. Manuscripts will be judged anonymously. The Press and the judges will not be able to offer critiques of manuscripts or to enter into correspondence about the manuscripts other than with the winning author.

Iowa School of Letters announces the 1984

\$1,000

award for short fiction

in cooperation with the Iowa Arts Council, Iowa Writers'
Workshop, and University of Iowa Press

Eligibility

Any writer who has not previously published a volume of prose fiction is eligible to enter the competition. Revised manuscripts which have been previously entered may be resubmitted. Writers who have published a volume of poetry are eligible also.

Sponsors

The Award was established in 1969 to encourage writing in a typically American literary genre. Each year, over 200 manuscripts are entered in the Short Fiction Award competition. Preliminary professional readings are organized by the Writers' Workshop, and the final judgment is made by a prominent writer or critic.

Prize

The winning author will receive a \$1,000 cash award provided by the Iowa Arts Council. The manuscript will be published by University of Iowa Press.

Manuscript

The manuscript must be a collection of short stories of at least 150 typewritten pages. Stories previously published in periodicals are eligible for inclusion. Xeroxed copies are acceptable. Stamped, self-addressed return packaging must accompany the manuscript. Please do not send cash, checks, or money orders. Reasonable care is taken, but we are not responsible for loss of manuscripts in the mails or for the return of those not accompanied by a stamped envelope. We assume the author retains a copy of the manuscript.

Submission

Manuscripts should be mailed to:
Iowa School of Letters Award for Short Fiction
Department of English
English-Philosophy Building
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa 52242

No application forms are necessary. Entries for the 1984 competition should be submitted between August 1, 1983, and September 30, 1983. Announcement of the winner will be made early in 1984.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

In this number of the NAR, designed for a long, hot summer, two features of note:

First, a selection from the new Graeme Gibson novel, *Perpetual Motion*, which, among other more human and humane matters, deals with the nineteenth century slaughter of the passenger pigeon—a “sport” that led swiftly to that poor bird’s extinction. The Gibson fiction is strong stuff—graphic and cruel and bloody—but doubtless no less strong than the irredeemable fact.

And, for the doggedly literate among us, Willis Barnstone offers a sonnet sequence—“Twenty Sonnets & a Nightingale,” to be precise—drawn from a much longer sequence of (literally) hundreds. If you thought the sonnet form was inappropriate for our time, think again.

For the second time in three years, the American Society of Magazine Editors has presented the National Magazine Award for Fiction to *The North American Review*. We’re enormously proud of the three authors whose work earned the award: Louise Erdrich, for “Scales” (March

1982); Erica Liederman, for “The Novitiate” (December 1982), and William F. Van Wert for “Putting and Gardening” (June 1982). We’re likewise proud of our publisher, the University of Northern Iowa, which has always taken scrupulous care that the NAR’s editors be free in deciding what fiction, non-fiction, and poetry are worthy of our readers.

One prideful postscript: “Putting and Gardening” is included in the latest *O. Henry Prize Stories* collection (from Doubleday), and “Scales” will be reprinted in *Best American Short Stories of 1983* (Houghton Mifflin).

Forthcoming books of interest to NAR readers: *Cathedral*, by Raymond Carver (Knopf); *Movies*, by Stephen Dixon (North Point), and two from Scott Sanders—*Wilderness Plots* (Norton) and *Fetching the Dead* (Illinois). Already published: *Shiloh, and Other Stories*, by Bobbie Ann Mason (Harper & Row), and *In Constant Flight*, by Elizabeth Tallent (Knopf). All are short fiction collections in this New Age of the Story.



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Robley Wilson, Jr.

MANAGING EDITOR
Sandra Witt

POETRY
Peter Cooley

DESIGN
Roy Behrens
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CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Margaret Atwood
David Hellerstein
Leo J. Hertz
Kenneth Lash
Barry Lopez
Stephen Minot
Mary Peterson
Scott Sanders
Lawrence Sturhahn

BUSINESS MANAGER
Charlotte L. Wilson

EDITORIAL &
BUSINESS OFFICES:

University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

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★ THE NORTH AMERICAN ★

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Moving rattles the brain, bangs it against the skull, like being punched in the head. We weren't made to be moved. The nest of things we build up around us are not—whether Woolco or Tiffany—"mere possessions." They are decisions, desires, reflections, history. Accumulations, yes, but like bark, not like snake-skins to be shrugged off against a rock.

Mobility is not progress. It is either a questionable necessity of technicliffe, or a will-o'-the-wisp deep in the fog of contemporary possibilities.

You can take everything with you? Of course. But first you must take apart the nest. You'll never be able to put it back together again. You start over. But with second-hand materials, dissociated materials. Will they work in a different place? Can they reassemble the image? (Can I be my self-same self there?)

Take the womb complex as stated. The cave, the clubhouse, the childhood nest of boxes. Under the bedclothes. And the final closure, the coffin. Are you sure you want to be cremated, scattered to the wind? Is that necessarily better than to be warm inside a worm?

Warm means safe. Safe means our fondest dream and futile hope. Like ideals which exist only because in nature they do not. Our possessions are the toy soldiers of our ideals. And defenders against the weathers of anxiety.

Franz Kafka is the all-time priest and magister of evolved anxiety. Life in the technostate. But his finest portrayal, in "The Burrow," was carved out in lines that went back beyond



Moving

primitive to prehistoric. A little animal lives underground in the forest in a lair so well-constructed and thought-out as to be undiscoverable. A dream of impregnability, like an atomic shelter. It has corridors, rooms, a "keep" for food. The animal ventures out to hunt only with inching care, and only on moonless nights. It goes on piling up food in the keep. It can live down there for months—safe, undiscoverable, "warm." But it is constantly afraid. Granted that no predator could ever see him. But they could smell him if there was the smallest chink in one of his walls. Just a pinprick, for the air to rise through carrying his smell. So he is constantly inspecting the walls, and though he finds no chink he cannot be sure. A pinprick is not visible. He fancies he hears a whistling sound. Like air escaping. His smell rising! He scurries around, his heart beating . . . scurries endlessly.

Recognize anybody?

The evolved animal can go beyond rational fear into the Rooseveltian—where a possibly healthy (well-grounded) fear can itself become the enemy. The abstraction riding up over the reality. And there's yet a step beyond that, Ahab's "little lower layer," into the fear of being afraid. Paralysis before the fact. Ifso facto.

During the time-space of moving I am without a burrow. If so, then the fact is that I am exposed. If I am exposed I might get scared. Not outright, like that stupid little animal. But way down inside, like evolved man, devious, the scare disguised as depression. Little bouts of the blues while packing, while drinking it up at a jolly farewell party with friends; a little tug at the edge of my smile while showing off pictures of my new

home. I carry them around, call them baby pictures. And you know that while folk gurgle as expected, they also have something contrary going on underneath, in those chasms measureless to man. In some way you are exceeding them. They don't like that. Anymore than you like leaving them, but wouldn't remotely consider not moving for that reason. Anymore than you'd consider staying because you're scared, depressed, dream of roots screaming when they're pulled up, like that medieval plant. Because there's the attraction of the other side of the mountain, where the sun shines all the livelong day. That silly and endearing belief, both descended from and contributing to concepts of heaven. It's built in, not logically but physiologically. Part of the survival mechanism. Adaptiveness. So when the animals



change their migratory path, you change yours or you'll starve. Maybe that's the depressive element—that something outside your control is forcing the move. You must go, whatever the loss. There is no real choice. Even, I suppose, if you're only moving to Dallas for a slicker job, but that's perhaps forcing the adaptive mechanism beyond its inherent design.

All my books are packed. Nothing is more decisive for us older book-types. They are the only furniture that matters. I packed them myself, with care and cossetting. Let the movers shake all the rest.

The cat plays in the empty boxes. The dog is nervous. I go on packing, day after day, for the long journey. The sealed boxes spread around the house. I walk between them, shift them around to make paths.

There is a law—one of these

enlightened modern laws—that requires a building servicing such and such many people to provide so and so many off-street parking places. Even if the building is a church. A church has bought my property. Business is good. An assistant pastor will live in the house, secure in the belief that walls don't talk. Many of my trees will be leveled because of that law. Old oaks, shagbark hickories, white pine, Scotch pine, the blue spruce and flowering bushes I planted. A complicated, interlocking series of irreversible destructions.

The cat will not tolerate the move, must be drugged, boxed and air mailed. She'll raise hell when I pick her up. Or maybe she'll get hooked on tranquilizers like the rest of us. The dog won't care, because as long as I'm in the car he's not moving anywhere.

It's a ridiculous business. Either one ought to stay permanently put or permanently unput, like an Indian holyfellow with his begging bowl, wandering from here to there until there's no distinction between them. Here becomes inside. The lair is inside. Meditating, he is simply lying down in his inside burrow. Security indeed.

A writing fellow has some of that, living much inside himself. But he equally has the other, the constant moving, discovering and destruction. Filling and emptying boxes of experience and idea, shuffling them around in the lumber-room of his mind. With the gut constantly restless under those ceaseless and often contrary messages coming down from above. Let alone the noise of those shifting boxes. What else hears them, may hear them?

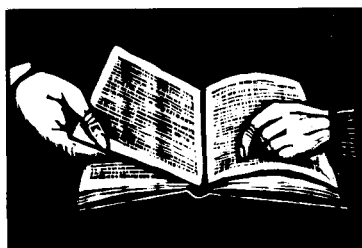
A message to my gut: we are moving to upper New England, the last outpost of civilized being in this country. And to the coast. Sand dunes, birds, whales to watch in the sad and splendid Atlantic.

You coming?

—Kenneth Lash

A few contributors' notes: Kenneth Lash will continue his quarterly column from a retirement retreat on Cape Cod . . . Margaret M. Gullette wrote for the NAR a while back on the blandishments of Disney World . . . Michael Wilkerson is a founder of the Indiana Review . . . John Roberts writes from Boulder, Colorado.

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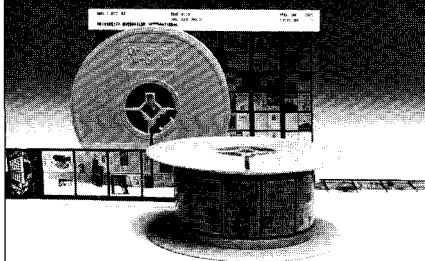
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UPRIVER

Lee's Ferry, Arizona; late October: Bill Leibfried, Arizona fish biologist making a trout study, looks at the glass tube he has just pulled out of the river and says: "Eight and a half degrees Celsius. Same as yesterday."

"You mean centigrade?" I ask him. "You sound like a weatherman."

For some reason, despite my early familiarity with the sciences, citing this water as 47 degrees Fahrenheit will always sound to me like a more precise gradient of cold. In this case, these tailrace waters from Glen Canyon Dam are about 15 degrees colder than the Colorado River's natural flow used to be at this time of year. Released from depths of a near-constant temperature, the water will stay as much as 35 degrees colder than summer flows once were. Most native fish have enacted an even more terminally exact way of measurement; we won't see any here.

I put my hand in the water and lift out a smooth cold stone to hold in my palm. In the morning light it is hard to tell whether the stone has always been around here, or was washed down by past floods, or if it came in with a truckload of others, dumped by the Park Service to hold the trampled banks together. The stone bears a coating of dark green slime, as does most of the exposed cobble on the beach. In the rising heat, the place begins to stink.

Someone has put rainbow trout in here; someone else pulls them out. The summer circus of river runners has given way to amiable, slow-moving men and women who disembark from hulking campers in the parking lot and walk down to the water carrying fishing poles and aluminum lawn chairs.

It is hot today. The huge troll that lives in Glen Canyon Dam sixteen miles upriver gets the word that Phoenix's air conditioners need power. He vents the cold anus of Lake Powell. Marble Canyon starts to surge. The fisherpeople, in periodic increments, back their lawn chairs up the bank ahead of the rising waterline. I see a broken mass of apricot-blush fish eggs drift by.

Colored lines drawn on various agencies' maps, plus the dam's bewildering tonnage of concrete,

Running the Grand Canyon Flush

impose on the land a strange, almost arbitrary, whimsy called *jurisdiction*. The subtle distinctions among Glen Canyon above, Marble Canyon in the immediate environs, and the Grand Canyon downstream seem at once obliterated and exaggerated. The overlaid jurisdictions are simple abstractions, supposedly easy to understand, but they have nothing to do with the freer authority of the river that used to flow through this country, making sense of its fringes.

Now Glen Canyon lies choked with the blue soup of "Lake" Powell. The Grand Canyon below, even in its awesomeness, is threatened by over-use and contradictory abuse from the very people who want to believe in their love of it but who live far away in a manner contrary to its health. And in between, Marble Canyon exists as a relatively discarded place serving as a kind of purgatory staging area for the other two.

Despite what the Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec of the Department of the Interior, builders and operators of Glen Canyon Dam) may tell us about the electrical needs of the Southwest, it is now possible to see for oneself that the production of the dam is that of glut. By putting together recent studies from sources as disparate as Amory Lovins, the Southwest Resource Council, New Mexico Public Service, Southern California Edison, Pacific Power and Gas, and the BuRec itself, I have come to understand that we begin this river trip on daily hydro-power releases from the dam that flush out solely for the purpose of providing Southwesterners scattered hundreds of miles away with the figurative power, as Lovins puts it, to cut their butter with a chainsaw. For this indulgence, our

society requires that now, after having stopped up Glen Canyon, we alternately subject the river corridor of Grand Canyon to a year's worth of flood and drought stages every day. Every working morning, the troll turns the river on; then he turns the river off. This whoosh-to-dribble operation of the faucet is called "peaking power"; and in terms of real costs, it is frightfully expensive. It may cost us the Grand Canyon.

As we rig out oar frames and wait for our shuttle crew to return, a big yellow dog lifts his leg and blesses the tarp covering one mound of our gear. The dog is not the only one confused about what territory is his around here. A raven tries three times to find a perch in a wispy tamarisk. None holds. He takes the edge of a brown Park Service dumpster. The raven belongs on mesquite, the tamarisk in Egypt, the dumpster God-knows-where.

By afternoon, tourists pile out of a bus and swarm us with questions—most often about how you "go to the bathroom" on a river trip. It is curious that in a place of such overwhelming power one of the first things people of our culture wonder about is the remoteness from plumbing.

Of these visitors, no one is quiet. No one seems to know quite how to behave. The marvels of where reddish-brown Moenkopi emerges and begins to shelf up to the towering Kaibab go seemingly un contemplated. Few see the near-pink blue heron take off and pump slowly downriver. As fall river runners dependent upon dam flushes, we, too, are misplaced. This must be what happens when a river loses its rhythm and heaves like a tide gone crazy.

Off in the cities, it is Monday. The low "weekend water" rises now for its workaday convulsions. We have a "river" to run. We deal with the world as we find it. But it comes somehow as heartening to know that the so-called minimum flows "allowed" for the off days are augmented by an indomitable 1000 cubic foot per second leak in the dam. It is heartening to think that someday that crack will widen, that someday that huge plug will break and come out of there, and this stomped-down, rolled-over, scrambled-up place will get a bath.

DOWNRIVER

Morning star. Gray-pink dawn, then a glow of red rimfire. High cirrus spins gold out of the purple dark. Frost on our bags.

*

Green water, red water, brown water, white. Lanie's blonde hair against rust and yellow crags. Red dory rocking high as a bark chip.

*

Load, load, load—duffle, cook box, beer, white food buckets. Every morning we look like a crew scouring for clues to a plane wreck. We leave nothing. Load. Lash. Unlash. Unload. Reload. Tie down. Push off. River!

*

Deep blue at sunrise. River must have gone into the sky. No water. The three rafts and the red dory lie stuck almost a foot deep in sand, their bows forty feet up the beach from where the waterline has dropped in the night.

Before we pull water-smoothed logs from a large snag of driftwood, before we pry the boats loose, before we use the logs as rollers to work the craft back down to the water, before all that, Gregor pads slowly down the beach, adding human footprints to the confused-looking tracks left by beaver, lizard, coyote, and squirming, dying larvae. He squats near where the water now laps around the waist of a truck-sized boulder. Yesterday, when we ran the booming torrents of the rapid above, this rock, then covered with exploding white-water, made one of the awesome holes we had to skirt. Now its damp exposed girth makes an eddy. The rapid lies as unnavigable as a rock garden. I see Gregor reach down and touch the water, a tentative disbelieving move, as if trying to find a wound, as if trying to tend a huge wounded beast.

*

Full moon rising. Black cliffs etch the sky. Pale light washes rocks. Fire pan coals glow—driftwood fires permitted on winter trips for "warming and aesthetics only." Dennis lies back, talks to the night sky. Buttercrunch, chops, wild rice, melons, yoghurt, and shortbreads all gone. "That aesthetic fire," Dennis tells the stars, "sure cooks good."

*

The sun slants under woolly rain-

clouds and lights up eerie white travertine boulders at the mouth of the Little Colorado. Brown and white bodies ease in turquoise-blue water. Here, river meets river and goes on as river. The power of confluence widens the sky. As a small private party on this off-season permit, we spread out now with the fortune of being here by ourselves. I find a quiet place and sound out into this union of flows the names of strong presences I have met in my life—as with this place, not all of them human.

*

Stars and scattered cloud filaments open the ghost vault high above the black, earmuff-close walls. The moon nudges an oblong moon rainbow over the rim. Knowing nothing of cliché, the coyotes who have been talking occasionally up the side canyon suddenly break into wild wavering night songs that seize you in the long bones.

*

Headwinds and whirlpools. Fern caves. Cascades. Emerald spray. Pink rattler. Goose wings in the sun. Ahead, Dennis's and Animal's boats glide down a steep glossy tongue into the shadows of twelve-foot fountains. We hear Shelly shriek with loosed glee and the splash-shock of cold waves. Bailing below—all of us laughing, wet and shivering in the immensity of where we are—Dennis hollers over, "I ain't running no more rapidoes in the shade."

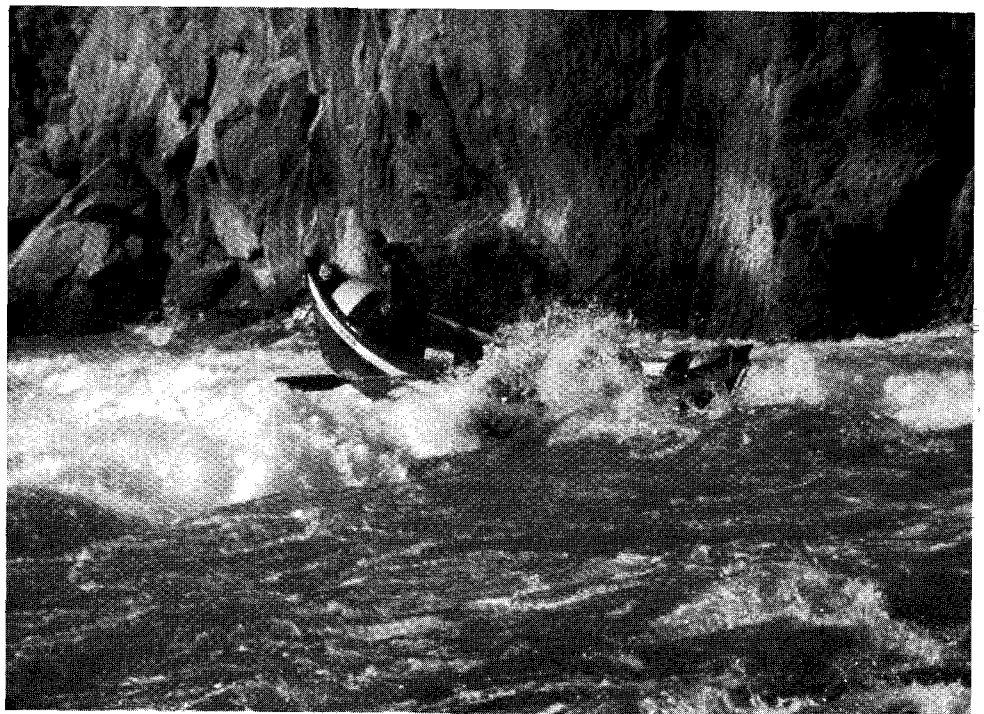
Green Vishnu schist. Polished rose flutes. Easy sinuous current. Then black-purple scoops, silver-white, bronze, gunmetal-blues of a tight, fast inner gorge. Huge paw reaches up and tips us on edge. Downstream they say they could see the whole bottom of our boat.

*

Working their way down to us from miles and days upriver, the man-made river tides begin to swell and sag unpredictably at odd hours. One night, after having been pressed by autumn's early nightfall to settle for a narrow plateau campsite, we find midnight waters rising into camp to within three feet of our sleeping bags, the boats bobbing in the moonlight twenty feet offshore, their slack moorings loosening the knots.

As we quietly agree to redouble our watch, the look on everyone's face reveals the real point: For now the measure could be moot. No one says anything, but the bank is slumping under our feet.

River runners, as their parties work sand downslope, must now face their own contribution to the canyon's degradation. Since 1963 when the reservoir began filling Glen Canyon, the Colorado's great silt washes, carrying from 50 to 500 million tons of sediment per year, have been dropping into the Lake Powell version of a wet landfill. Without this redeposition of silt, the beaches in Grand Canyon are crumbling. To witness the frightening speed of this process



under one's own feet is to become quickly adamant about the urgency of reevaluating the dam's usefulness.

In the immediate meantime, we calmly consolidate our gear, knowing that with another foot or so of river-rise we will have to cast off, possibly to run the rapids below in the dark.

This time, the flush levels out. Breakfast is early and somber.

*

Maidenhair ferns drape from seep cracks. Jerry leads up the wall. Fingernail climb to the sun-splashed waterfalls and deep pools.

*

Andy says that somebody who in the starlight looked like a raccoon awakened him by crunching a mouse near his head, then scrambling past him and off to poke around down by the boats. The next day we run Crystal Rapid, and the dory, unable to slip by the big holes among the sucking hydraulics at this tricky water level, takes the full dolphin-bronc ride, washing two of us out and swamping three chambers. What connects these two incidents in the flowing state of mind gained on a river is that the following morning we discover a cacomistle—a usually secretive animal old-timers call a ring-tailed cat—wet, shook, and hungry in the main hold of the dory. Andy's raccoon.

It occurs to me that in trading the hunt for the chance of easy pickings, the trapped ringtail got a unique and terrifying ride in sealed blackness with banging shifting cargo that could have crushed him. And now, eleven miles downstream, the experiment could still cost him his life in a desert environment where the delicate patterns of movement leave scant room for mistakes.

He takes tidbits of our breakfast laid on deck to coax him out, then jumps ship, disappears in a rippling scurry through a tamarisk grove.

At least the cacomistle has the skills with which to try to fit back in. I hope we have the same sense. We're all on a big ride away from the hunt; and when the blinding pounding foam is suddenly between you and the boat, you had better know deep inside what skills are really yours and which way is home.

*

Today it is color in the eyes, color from the sky-slanting walls, from the high sloped benches, the transverse gorges, from the breast of a male Lazuli bunting, the dizzying mysterious boils of water, a collared lizard

extravagant as beadwork, the labyrinth of shadows.

How many shades of light can a human being take in!

Yes, the rapids are a riot of adrenaline and risk and liquid explosion. The rapids let boatrowers be as determined or foolhardy, as coolly thrilled or scared crazy, as *macho* or *macha* or as simply hopeful as they wish. But the real challenge of the canyon is to breathe quietly for what minutes you can muster and to try to figure out from the mile-deep naked evidence of marled gold and vermilion and fluted red, black, purple, and impossible indigo what has been going on around here for the past few million eons, and how that, whatever that is, has also booted you along as an eyeball-toting creature somehow evolved enough at least to stand here in a random instant and take a look at some of it.

*

Upset Rapid on a gnarly day: My turn to dodge rocks in the dory; and the route we scout and choose—with its backward approach, fast-sliding traverse of the tongue, and then a 180 behind one of the top boulders, if I can remember where I am by then—classifies technically as a hope shot.

We hurl down the right side of the throat at a steep ferry angle, hauling away from the grinder on the left and shooting through the side waves past the eaters in the middle.

The turns were there and I was feeling good, getting the halfway-through surge that tells you you're going to make it, and pulling hard for a clean exit to the right when a rip current grabbed us. Suddenly we were headed back fast into the heavy stuff with rocks all over, one big one dead on. Now it was a choice: either slam sideways into the rock or pull out of the ferry and try to straighten her out in time for a nose shot into the huge keeper below, which the whole river seemed to be pouring into.

It looked like a good day to die. The real choice was how to go with some semblance of grace. My mind flashed up a scene of the red dory wrapped around that rock like a crushed beer can, and I thought that wouldn't look too good. I arched my back into the oars and went for the keeper. Get snuffed fast and go for a ride on the way.

Measured from the depths of the swoop that led into it, Upset's monster topped out that day as nearly a twenty-foot pounding fountain

guarded by a suck hole that rammed everything right down into the basement, including the whole collapsing weight of the wave itself about every fourth beat. If I could get lined up, it would all depend upon when we hit it. Three of us in the boat—Andy, Jerry and me. I hauled hard on the left for my last pivoting pull just as we dropped over the lip.

I heard Jerry shout, "She'll take anything nose first. You got it!"

I don't know who he was trying to reassure. I left my stomach somewhere in that hole. The whole world went off like a cannon boom. Andy in the front of the boat hollered, "Whaaa!" and suddenly he and the bow were straight up over my head, water tearing apart everywhere. Huge forces scooped us out of the hole and shot the dory up like a spat-out surfboard. Then gravity quit working. If we had had Jerry in the nose with Andy, instead of behind me, we might have made it. The boat held on end for an instant, completely out of the water tip to tip. Jerry, hell. If we had had just one more bottle of Tabasco sauce in the nose hatch, we would have tipped the balance, teetered over the brink and shot on down the other side. But we started to keel over, then slid backwards right back into the maelstrom.

Suddenly I'm being pummeled in the dark. (Oar-pullers, with a certain look in their eyes, call this the Maytag treatment.) Scrambled dark. Can't tell which is up. Feel the boat. Upside down on me? Figure it's heading for the top. Kick free and find pale green roaring light.

When I break the surface, I see Jerry has already clambered up onto the capsized hull. Andy has bobbed up downstream a ways, blind and sputtering. We flush out into the sweep at the bottom of the rapid and have lots to keep us busy in the narrow chutes below. But we're O.K. and we make it.

Later, Martell sure tastes good.

Stretched out on my back on a beach, I watch a gondola-shaped cloud clear the rim and make its way across the sky-slot, trailing a wisp of cirrus like a contrail. The slow jet of the gods, I think, plying their own currents.

Except for an occasional turn of the hand to let some sand trickle through my fingers, I don't care to move. My mind strikes a deadly playful, though melancholy, vein of thought:

What does it matter that some minor authority is trying to compress this place of immense variety and time into something singular and terminal? Let them play with their faucet. In a place where most of us would think the turns of nature have been left alone, and where we might expect to find our heritage protected intact—as the majority has instructed Congress to ordain—we find, instead, a weird post-dam ecosystem choking on whimsy. Beyond the hypocrisy of it, so what?

Wildlife finds its migration routes cut. Native fish fail to reproduce. Beings of any seasonal sense are battered senseless. Diverse and storied communities of vegetation collapse to algae. Microbiota shrivel before we even know of them. And the whole system of relationships that connect these things heads into final palpitations. Surely we can justify some pleasure by these spasms.

Martin Litton, thirty-year veteran of the Colorado River's travails, has said that under current management of Glen Canyon Dam the riparian life zone of Grand Canyon has at best only twenty years left. If the Dolan Report from the University of Virginia's Environmental Sciences Department is correct, the BuRec's plans to widen the fluctuations of releases even further will degrade the canyon's vital beaches even faster. Some might consider that merciful.

As for the human connection, the wider flush patterns proposed will make travel along the river in any season untenable except for mad waders daring flash floods. Unabated, the BuRec's practice, our practice, will soon reduce the river corridor to a hydro-power flush trench. Shall we say, then, that a child just now learning to walk cannot grow up fast enough to experience the difference between that and a live river? Shall the culture of trench, not of river, shape that child?

Who cares? We have our progress. And here our culture has found the perfect metaphor for its peculiar kind of progress: Gush. Then Emptiness.

And what of it? The rhetoric of preservation aside, the canyon does not need our help. As something transformed for all time, the canyon will, eventually, expunge itself of this disease and go on, probably because those who spread the disease are doubtful survivors. The rest is timeless. Some new crawly will find the shell. It doesn't matter.

DEBORAH PEASE

PATHS

She watches the long path through the field
Wondering if she hopes for a visitor.
Anyone approaching the house must come through the field,
Marshy in patches, sprouting cattails, thronged now
With clumps of blown goldenrod.
The wind is ceaseless on her hill, modified only
By moods or nightfall.

She peers through the glitter of window screen
At the scintillation of poplar leaves, poplars marking
The curve of the path, dithery sentries authorizing
Anyone. Their welcome is wasted.
Only so many gazes in a day
Can be spent on sun-tinselled tree tops.
Does she hope for a visitor?

If she lived by the sea, she'd pace her widow's walk,
Widowed, pondering the harbor bound ships
And the salt-bearded, conjured husband
She never married; a husband from the sea
Whose walk she would recognize
Although she has never seen it, whose eyes
Would be canny and quick as a dolphin's.

Here, visitors pass through a forest
As in a fairy-tale, crossing a zone of darkness
Before achieving the gold-foiled field.
The darkness contains no terrors, only a mossy descent
Decorous with mushrooms and ferns, ferns
Gigantic as the spread wings of extinct birds.
The ferns brush gently at waist level.

Screened-in, she longs for the advent
Of Something. Something more than the gifts
Of poplar leaves and warblers, more than goldenrod,
More than rainbowed morning mist, more
Than mountain ridges, vague or sharply etched, more
Than crickets and the menorahs of pine boughs,
More than her possession of planets and stars.

She hopes and does not hope and so
The path becomes a torment.
Her vigilance may be rewarded but the reward,
However lavish, will be suitable only
For a late summer day, not
For the winter ahead when she must gouge
Short, endless gullies through the snow.

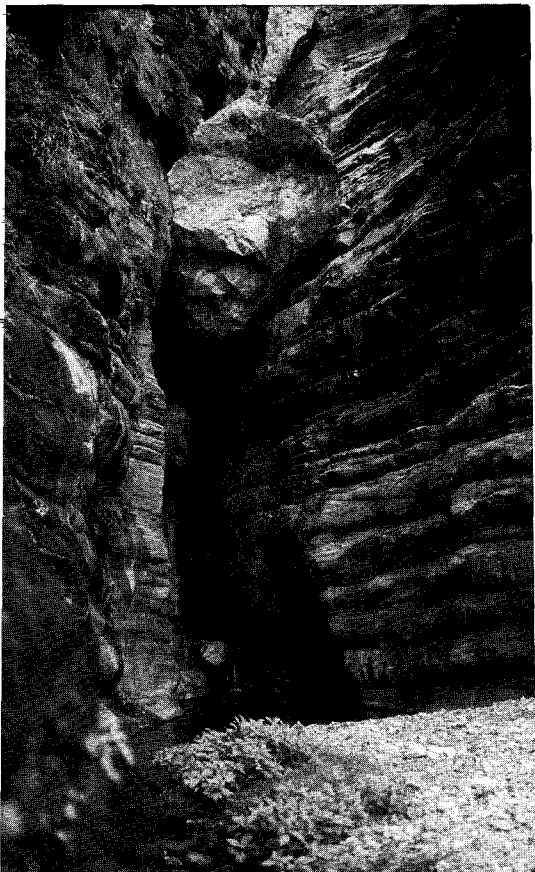
But what should matter to us is *our* link with the original. What *is* terminal is *our* time within the presence of this place and within its incredible, indifferent offering of Beauty. Its ruination is temporal unto us.

This time the nation's split personality of development and preservation has met itself in a place held in awe by people all over the world. Having already appropriated the canyon from the native Havasupai, Hualapai and others, do we now intend by our handling it to death that the whole earth should give up its claim to it? that we should have it for our one small purpose? that we should be the Brief Generation who went down ruining even the Grand Canyon because flicking switches was the only way we could imagine to do things?

This is not a choice between air conditioning and a place to print up as color slides. It is a larger choice with the gifts of the land, our integrity as a people, and the course of our sanity at stake. We each have to be either the guardian of the spirit or the troll for our time.

So, when closed in by the time stealers, our minds must find the openings. And there are many: If

Elves Chasm



peaking power makes sense, it makes most sense where reservoirs already back up into each other. Below Lake Mead at Hoover Dam, for example, peak flushes would change daily water levels downstream behind Davis Dam by about an eighth of an inch. The power generated there would originate nearly 300 miles closer to projected markets in California than that from Glen Canyon Dam. Also, exchanges of power among diverse regional grids can accomplish much the same thing as can peaking power from one source. These formerly too-expensive changeovers, now benefitting from new booster and transmission-line technologies, and additionally offering backup for brownouts, may now be worth it.

Diversification makes for other options. Bonus-time billing by utilities should be an easy one. People would simply find it more economical to run some of their machines at night, thus leveling out peak demands. Renovating hydro-power facilities at small existing dams and working with new low-head hydro applications could largely supplement base-load requirements in many local areas with no additional environmental damage. New energy-efficient appliances are on line. Comparison labeling of the electricity sops they compete with would be a plus. Cogeneration, a proven technique, would suddenly provide the copper smelting and secondary oil recovery industries—among others common in the West—with much of their own electricity, plus, in some cases, even collateral power to sell from their now largely wasted excess heat and steam. And, despite an odd federal antipathy, truly hot ideas for solar energy are spreading in a grass-roots movement that is starting to look more like a grass fire.

Irrespective of population increases, the grandiose estimates of future energy needs projected by the government and the utility companies have had to be consistently adjusted downward, meaning we are already doing better. We really can do more with less. Now if we can just turn to some new ways of cooperation and keep certain deadening habits and the momentum of some agencies' sandbox projects from killing what we have left in the transition, we may yet come out of this alive, economically and spiritually.

We have an embarrassing number

of alternatives to flushing the Grand Canyon. To make them stick, they should all include, of course, the most productive of alternatives, those of conservation and the further development of renewable energy sources, which could reduce the energy requirements of California and the greater Southwest by forty percent—this from a study by the Southwest Resource Council, a Utah-based conservation organization. A forty percent boon is a factor of power so great as to make *any* production from Glen Canyon Dam as negligible as striking flint sparks at the sun.

Ah, well. For now, I am where each cacomistle takes his own risks. Such is the mystery of the individual. It will be a while yet before I go back to where we have to decide, either tacitly or actively, whether or not to take each other's risks. Maybe then I can find a way to say with some fierceness that, simply because there resides no wonder in it, I do not want to take the BuRec's kind of risk with the Grand Canyon. No matter how much money we think we can make from that gamble, it will leave us impoverished.

I hear the water's hush. The gondola cloud disappears over the far rim. The cool sand slips through my fingers.

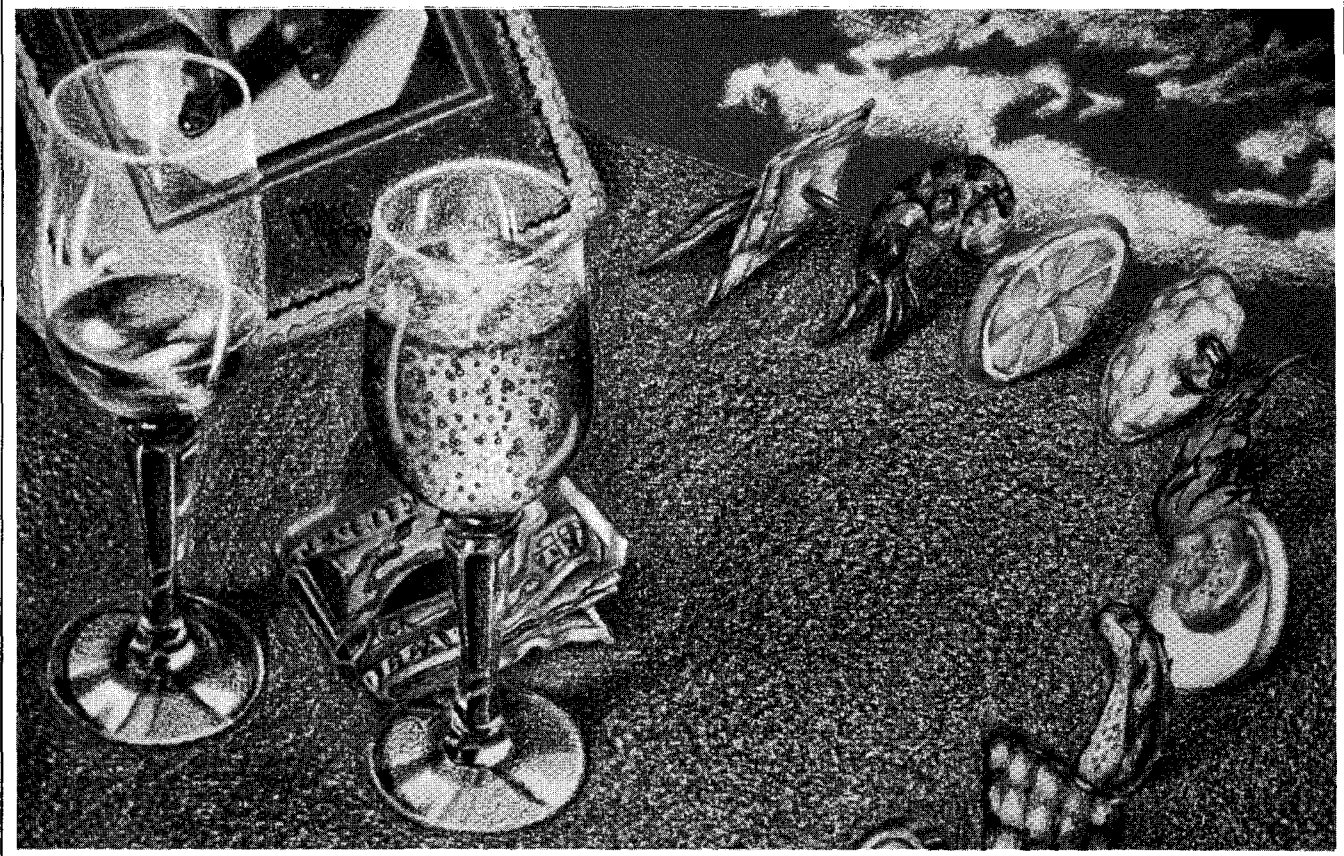
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Adrift. The skyriver inverts chasms in a slow whirl. Black cones and basalt dikes loom against red walls. Then you feel the first low vibrations rolling up from almost a mile downriver. Lava Falls coming up. Within a quarter mile, the Grand's granddaddy rapid starts to pound on your chest. Then you see ahead where the river V's glassily, pours by gleaming black domes and drops out of sight. You pull in to scout, but the look does you no good. No way to understand it.

It is only now as you slide toward the smooth brink that you feel the force gather speed. The air surrounds you with concussion. The tilt steepens, though the drop ahead still obscures the source of the huge booming below. You see only the tops of foam plumes shattered in pulses by the breeze. Then just before the long falling swoop, it all opens up to you. In the sun, the air fills with mist and sparkles—visions and teeth. These are the days of your life. Lava coming up. Lava always coming up.

—John Roberts

RAYMOND CARVER FEVER



Carlyle was in a spot. He'd been in a spot all summer, since early June when his wife had left him. But up until a little while ago, just a few days before he had to start meeting his classes at the high school, Carlyle hadn't needed a sitter. He'd been the sitter. Every day and every night he'd attended to the children. Their mother, he told them, was away on a long trip.

Debbie, the first sitter he contacted, was a fat girl, nineteen years old, who told Carlyle she came from a big family. Kids loved her, she said. She offered a couple of names for reference. She penciled them on a piece of notebook paper. Carlyle took the names, folded the piece of paper, and put it in his shirt pocket. He told her he had meetings the next day. He said she could start to work for him the next morning. She said, "Okay."

He understood that his life was entering a new period. Eileen had left while Carlyle was still filling out his grade reports. She'd said she was going to Southern California to begin a new life for herself there. She'd gone with Richard Hoopes, one of Carlyle's colleagues at the high school. Hoopes was a drama teacher and glass-blowing instructor who'd apparently turned his grades in on time, taken his things, and left town in a hurry with Eileen. Now, the long and painful summer nearly behind him, and his classes about to resume, Carlyle had finally turned his attention to this matter of finding a babysitter. His first efforts had not been successful. In his desperation to find someone—anyone—he'd taken Debbie on.

In the beginning, he was grateful to have this girl turn up in response to his call. He'd yielded up the house and children to her as if she were a relative. So he had no one to blame but himself, his own carelessness, he was convinced, when he came home early from school one day that first week and pulled into the drive next to a car that had a big pair of flannel dice hanging from the rearview mirror. To his astonishment, he saw his children in the front yard, their clothes filthy, playing with a dog big enough to bite off their hands. His son, Franklin, had the hiccups and had been crying. Sarah, his daughter, began to cry when she saw him get out of the car. They were sitting on the grass, and the dog was licking their hands and faces. The dog growled at him and then moved off a little as Carlyle made for his children. He picked up Franklin and then he picked up Sarah. One child under each arm, he made for his front door. Inside the house, the phonograph was turned up so high the front windows vibrated.

In the living room, three teenaged boys jumped to their feet from where they'd been sitting around the coffee table. Beer bottles stood on the table and cigarettes burned in the ashtray. Rod Stewart screamed from the stereo. On the sofa, Debbie, the fat girl, sat with another teenaged boy. She stared at Carlyle with dumb disbelief as he entered the living room. The fat girl's blouse was unbuttoned. She had her legs drawn under her, and she was smoking a cigarette. The living room was filled with

smoke and music. The fat girl and her friend got off the sofa in a hurry.

"Mr. Carlyle, wait a minute," Debbie said. "I can explain."

"Don't explain," Carlyle said. "Get the hell out of here. All of you. Before I throw you out." He tightened his grip on the children.

"You owe me for four days," the fat girl said, as she tried to button her blouse. She still had the cigarette between her fingers. Ashes fell from the cigarette as she tried to button up. "Forget today. You don't owe me for today. Mr. Carlyle, it's not what it looks like. They dropped by to listen to this record."

"I understand, Debbie," he said. He let the children down onto the carpet. But they stayed close to his legs and watched the people in the living room. Debbie looked at them and shook her head slowly, as if she'd never laid eyes on them before. "Goddamn it, get out!" Carlyle said. "Now. Get going. All of you."

He went over and opened the front door. The boys acted as if they were in no real hurry: They picked up their beer and started slowly for the door. The Rod Stewart record was still playing. One of them said, "That's my record."

"Get it," Carlyle said. He took a step toward the boy and then stopped.

"Don't touch me, okay? Just don't touch me," the boy said. He went over to the phonograph, picked up the arm, swung it back, and took his record off while the turntable was still spinning.

Carlyle's hands were shaking. "If that car's not out of the drive in one minute, one minute—I'm calling the police." He felt sick and dizzy with his anger. He saw, really saw, spots dance in front of his eyes.

"Hey, listen, we're on our way, all right. We're going," the boy said.

They filed out of the house. Outside, the fat girl stumbled a little. She weaved as she moved toward the car. Carlyle saw her stop and bring her hands up to her face. She stood like that in the drive for a minute. Then one of the boys pushed her from behind and said her name. She dropped her hands and got into the back seat of the car.

"Daddy will get you into some clean clothes," Carlyle told his children, trying to keep his voice steady. "I'll give you a bath, and put you into some clean clothes. Then we'll go out for some pizza. How does pizza sound to you?"

"Where's Debbie?" Sarah asked him.

"She's gone," Carlyle said.

That evening, after he'd put the children to bed, he called Carol, the woman from school he'd been seeing for the past month. He told her what had happened with his sitter.

"My kids were out in the yard with this big dog," he said. "The dog was as big as a wolf. The babysitter was in the house with a bunch of her hoodlum boyfriends. They had Rod Stewart going full blast, and they were tying one on while my kids were outside playing with this strange

dog." He brought his fingers to his temples and held them there while he talked.

"My God," Carol said. "Poor sweetie, I'm so sorry." Her voice sounded indistinct. He pictured her letting the receiver slide down to her chin, as she was in the habit of doing while talking on the phone. He'd seen her do it before. It was something he found vaguely irritating. Did he want her to come over to his place? she asked. She would. She thought maybe she'd better do that. She'd call her sitter. Then she'd drive to his place. She wanted to. He shouldn't be afraid to say when he needed affection, she said. Carol was one of the secretaries in the principal's office at the high school where Carlyle taught art classes. She was divorced and had one child, a neurotic ten-year-old the father had named Dodge, after his automobile.

"No, that's all right," Carlyle said. "But thanks. Thanks, Carol. The kids are in bed, but I think I'd feel a little funny, you know, having company tonight."

She didn't offer again. "Carlyle, I'm sorry about what happened. But I understand your wanting to be alone tonight. I respect that. I'll see you at school tomorrow."

He could hear her waiting for him to say something else. "That's two babysitters in less than a week," he said. "I'm going out of my tree with this."

"Honey, don't let it get you down," she said. "Something will turn up. I'll help you find somebody this weekend. It'll be all right, you'll see."

"Thanks again for being there when I need you," he said. "You're one in a million, you know."

"Night, Carlyle," she said.

After he'd hung up, he wished he could have thought of something else to say to her instead of what he'd just said. He'd never talked that way before in his life. They weren't having a love affair, he wouldn't call it that, but he liked her. She knew it was a hard time for him, and she didn't make demands.

After Eileen had left for California, Carlyle had spent every waking minute for the first month with his children. He supposed the shock of her going had caused this, but he didn't want to let the children out of his sight. He'd certainly not been interested in seeing other women, and for a time he didn't think he ever would be. He felt as if he were in mourning. His days and nights were passed in the company of his children. He cooked for them—he had no appetite himself—washed and ironed their clothes, drove them into the country where they picked flowers and ate sandwiches wrapped up in waxed paper. He took them to the supermarket and let them pick out what they liked. And every few days they went to the park, or else to the library, or the zoo. They took old bread to the zoo so they could feed the ducks. At night, before tucking them in, Carlyle read to them—Aesop, Hans Christian Andersen, the Brothers Grimm.

"When is Mama coming back?" one of them might ask him in the middle of a fairy tale.

"Soon," he'd say. "One of these days. Now listen to this." Then he'd read the tale to its conclusion, kiss them, and turn off the light.

And while they'd slept, he had wandered the rooms of his house with a glass in his hand, telling himself that,

yes, sooner or later, Eileen would come back. In the next breath, he would say, "I never want to see your face again. I'll never forgive you for this, you crazy bitch." Then, a minute later: "Come back, sweetheart, please. I love you and need you. The kids need you too." Some nights that summer he fell asleep in front of the TV and woke up with the set still going and the screen filled with snow. This was the period when he didn't think he would be seeing any women for a long time, if ever. At night, sitting in front of the TV with an unopened book or magazine next to him on the sofa, he often thought of Eileen. When he did, he might remember her sweet laugh, or else her hand rubbing his neck if he complained of a soreness there. It was at these times that he thought he could weep. He thought, You hear about stuff like this happening to other people.

Just before the incident with Debbie, when some of the shock and grief had worn off, he'd phoned an employment service to tell them something of his predicament and his requirements. Someone took down the information and said they would get back to him. Not many people wanted to do housework *and* babysit, they said, but they'd find somebody. A few days before he had to be at the high school for meetings and registration, he called again and was told there'd be somebody at his house first thing the next morning.

That person was a thirty-five year old woman with hairy arms and run-over shoes. She shook hands with him and listened to him talk without asking a single question about the children—not even their names. When he took her into the back of the house where the children were playing, she simply stared at them for a minute without saying anything. When she finally smiled, Carlyle noticed for the first time that she had a tooth missing. Sarah left her crayons and got up to come over and stand next to him. She took Carlyle's hand and stared at the woman. Franklin stared at her too. Then he went back to his coloring. Carlyle thanked the woman for her time and said he would be in touch.

Over the summer Eileen had sent a few cards, letters, and photographs of herself to the children, and some pen and ink drawings of her own that she'd done since she'd gone away. She also sent Carlyle long, rambling letters in which she asked for his understanding in this matter—*this matter*—but told him that she was happy. Happy. As if, Carlyle thought, happiness was all there was to life. She told him that if he really loved her, as he said he did, and as she really believed—she loved him, too, don't forget—then he would understand and accept things as they were. She wrote, "That which is truly bonded can never become unbonded." Carlyle didn't know if she was talking about their own relationship, or her way of life out in California. He hated the word *bonded*. What did it have to do with the two of them? Did she think they were a corporation? He thought Eileen must be losing her mind to talk like that. He read that part again and then crumpled the letter.

But a few hours later, he retrieved the letter from the trash can where he'd thrown it and put it with her other cards and letters in a box on the shelf in his closet. In one

of the envelopes there was a photograph of her in a big floppy hat, wearing a bathing suit. And there was a pencil drawing on heavy paper of a woman on a river bank in a filmy gown, her hands covering her eyes, her shoulders slumped. It was, Carlyle assumed, Eileen showing her heartbreak over the situation. In college, she had majored in art, and even though she'd agreed to marry him, she said she intended to do something with her talent. Carlyle said he wouldn't have it any other way. She owed it to herself, he said. She owed it to both of them. They had loved each other in those days. He knew they had. He couldn't imagine ever loving anyone again the way he'd loved her. And he'd felt loved, too. Then, after eight years of being married to him, Eileen had pulled out. She was, she said in her letter, "going for it."

After talking to Carol, he looked in on the children, who were asleep. Then he went into the kitchen and made himself a drink. He thought of calling Eileen to talk to her about the babysitting crisis, but decided against it. He had her phone number and her address out there, of course. But he'd only called once and, so far, had not written a letter. This was partly out of a feeling of bewilderment with the situation, partly out of anger and humiliation. Once, earlier in the summer, after a few drinks, he'd chanced humiliation and called. Richard Hoopes answered the phone. Richard had said, "Hey, Carlyle," as if he were still Carlyle's friend. And then, as if remembering something, he said, "Just a minute, all right?"

Eileen had come on the line and said, "Carlyle, how are you? How are the kids? Tell me about yourself." He told her the kids were fine. But before he could say anything else, she interrupted him to say, "I know *they're* fine. What about *you*?" Then she went on to tell him that her head was in the right place for the first time in a long time. Next she wanted to talk about his head and his karma. She'd looked into his karma. It was going to improve any time now, she said. Carlyle listened, hardly able to believe his ears. Then he said, "I have to go now, Eileen." And he hung up. The phone rang a minute or so later, but he let it ring. When it stopped ringing, he took the phone off the hook and left it off until he was ready for bed.

He wanted to call her now, but he wouldn't do it. He still missed her and wanted to confide in her. He longed to hear her voice—sweet, steady, not manic as it had been for months now—but he was afraid Richard Hoopes might answer. Carlyle knew he didn't want to hear that man's voice again. Richard had been a colleague for three years and, Carlyle supposed, a kind of friend. At least he was someone Carlyle ate lunch with in the faculty dining room, someone who talked about Tennessee Williams and the photographs of Ansel Adams. But even if he called and Eileen answered, she might begin to go on about his karma. If she did this, he thought it possible that he could threaten her life.

While he was sitting there with his glass in his hand, trying to remember what it had felt like to be married and intimate with someone, the phone rang. He picked up the receiver, heard a trace of static on the line and knew, even before she'd said his name, that it was Eileen.

"I was just thinking about you," Carlyle said, and at once regretted saying it.

"See! I knew I was on your mind, Carlyle. Well, I was thinking about you, too. That's why I called." He drew a breath. She *was* losing her mind. That much was clear to him. She kept talking. "Now listen," she said. "The big reason I called is that I know things are in kind of a mess out there right now. Don't ask me how, but I know. I'm sorry, Carlyle. But here's the thing. You're still in need of a good housekeeper and sitter combined, right? Well, she's practically right there in the neighborhood! Oh, you may have found someone already, and that's good, if that's the case. If so, it's supposed to be that way. But see, just in case you're having trouble in that area, there's this woman who used to work for Richard's mother. I told Richard about the potential problem, and he put himself to work on it. You want to know what he did? Are you listening? He called his mother who used to have this woman who kept house for her. The woman's name is Mrs. Webster. She looked after things for Richard's mother before his aunt and her daughter moved in there. Richard was able to get a number through his mother. He talked to Mrs. Webster today. Richard did. Mrs. Webster is going to call you tonight. Or else maybe she'll call you in the morning. One or the other. Anyway, she's going to volunteer her services, if you need her. You might, you never can tell. Even if your situation is okay right now, which I hope it is. But some time or another you might need her. You know what I'm saying? If not this minute, some other time. Okay? How are the kids? What are they up to?"

"The children are fine, Eileen. They're asleep now," he said. Maybe he should tell her they cried themselves to sleep every night? He wondered if he should tell her the truth—that they hadn't asked about her even once in the last couple of weeks. He decided not to say anything.

"I called earlier, but the line was busy. I told Richard you were probably talking to your girl friend," Eileen said and laughed. "Think positive thoughts. You sound depressed," she said.

"I have to go, Eileen." He started to hang up, and he took the receiver from his ear. But she was still talking.

"Tell Franklin and Sarah I love them. Tell them I'm sending some more pictures. Tell them that. I don't want them to forget their mother is an artist. Maybe not a great artist yet, that's not important. But, you know, an artist. It's important they shouldn't forget that."

Carlyle said, "I'll tell them."

"Richard says hello."

Carlyle didn't say anything. He said the word to himself—*hello*. What could the man possibly mean by this? Then he said, "Thanks for calling. Thanks for talking to that woman."

"Mrs Webster!"

"Yes. I'd better get off the phone now. I don't want to run up your nickel."

Eileen laughed. "It's only money. Money's not important except as a necessary medium of exchange. There are more important things than money. But then you already know that."

He held the receiver out in front of him. He looked at the instrument from which her voice was issuing.

"Carlyle, things are going to get better for you. I *know* they are. You may think I'm crazy or something," she said. "But just remember."

Remember what? Carlyle wondered in alarm, thinking he must have missed something she'd said. He brought the receiver in close. "Eileen, thanks for calling," he said.

"We have to stay in touch," Eileen said. "We have to keep all lines of communication open. I think the worst is over. For both of us. I've suffered too. But we're going to get what we're supposed to get out of this life, both of us, and we're going to be made *stronger* for it in the long run."

"Good night," he said. He put the receiver back. Then he looked at the phone. He waited. It didn't ring again. But an hour later it did ring. He answered it.

"Mr. Carlyle." It was an old woman's voice. "You don't know me, but my name is Mrs. Jim Webster. I was supposed to get in touch."

"Mrs. Webster. Yes," he said. Eileen's mention of the woman came back to him. "Mrs. Webster, can you come to my house in the morning? Early. Say seven o'clock?"

"I can do that easily," the old woman said. "Seven o'clock. Give me your address."

"I'd like to be able to count on you," Carlyle said.

"You can count on me," she said.

"I can't tell you how important it is," Carlyle said.

"Don't you worry," the old woman said.

The next morning, when the alarm went off, he wanted to keep his eyes closed and keep on with the dream he was having. Something about a farmhouse. And there was a waterfall in there, too. Someone, he didn't know who, was walking along the road carrying something. Maybe it was a picnic hamper. He was not made uneasy by the dream. In the dream, there seemed to exist a sense of well-being.

Finally, he rolled over and pushed something to stop the buzzing. He lay in bed a while longer. Then he got up, put his feet into his slippers and went out to the kitchen to start the coffee.

He shaved and dressed for the day. Then he sat down at the kitchen table with coffee and a cigarette. The children were still in bed. But in five minutes or so he planned to put boxes of cereal on the table and lay out bowls and spoons, then go in to wake them for breakfast. He really couldn't believe that the old woman who'd phoned him last night would show up this morning, as she'd said she would. He decided he'd wait until five minutes after seven o'clock, and then he'd call in, take the day off, and make every effort in the book to locate someone reliable. He brought the cup of coffee to his lips.

It was then that he heard a rumbling sound out in the street. He left his cup and got up from the table to look out the window. A pickup truck had pulled over to the curb in front of his house. The pickup cab shook as the engine idled. Carlyle went to the front door, opened it and waved. An old woman waved back and then let herself out of the vehicle. Carlyle saw the driver lean over and disappear under the dash. The truck gasped, shook itself once more, and fell still.

"Mr. Carlyle?" the old woman said, as she came slowly up his walk carrying a large purse.

"Mrs. Webster," he said. "Come on inside. Is that your husband? Ask him in. I just made coffee."

"It's okay," she said. "He has his thermos."

Carlyle shrugged. He held the door for her. She stepped inside and they shook hands. Mrs. Webster smiled. Carlyle nodded. They moved out to the kitchen. "Did you want me today then?" she asked.

"Let me get the children up," he said. "I'd like them to meet you before I leave for school."

"That'd be good," she said. She looked around his kitchen. She put her purse on the drainboard.

"Why don't I get the children?" he said. "I'll just be a minute or two."

In a little while, he brought the children out and introduced them. They were still in their pajamas. Sarah was rubbing her eyes. Franklin was wide awake. "This is Franklin," Carlyle said. "And this one here, this is my Sarah." He held onto Sarah's hand and turned to Mrs. Webster. "They need someone, you see. We need someone we can count on. I guess that's our problem."

Mrs. Webster moved over to the children. She fastened the top button of Franklin's pajamas. She moved the hair away from Sarah's face. They let her do it. "Don't you kids worry now," she said to them. "Mr. Carlyle, it'll be all right. We're going to be fine. Give us a day or two to get to know each other, that's all. But if I'm going to stay, why don't you give Mr. Webster the all-clear sign? Just wave at him through the window," she said, and then she gave her attention back to the children.

Carlyle stepped to the bay window and drew the curtain. An old man was watching the house from the cab of the truck. He was just bringing a thermos cup to his lips. Carlyle waved to him, and with his free hand the man waved back. Carlyle watched him roll down the truck window and throw out what was left in his cup. Then he bent down under the dash again—Carlyle imagined him touching some wires together—and in a minute the truck started and began to shake. The old man put the truck in gear and pulled away from the curb.

Carlyle turned from the window. "Mrs. Webster," he said. "I'm glad you're here."

"Likewise, Mr. Carlyle," she said. "Now you go on about your business before you're late. Don't worry about anything. We're going to be fine. Aren't we, kids?"

The children nodded their heads. Franklin held onto her dress with one hand. He put the thumb of his other hand into his mouth.

"Thank you," Carlyle said. "I feel, I really feel a hundred percent better." He shook his head and grinned. He felt a welling in his chest as he kissed each of his children goodbye. He told Mrs. Webster what time she could expect him home, put on his coat, said goodbye once more, and went out of the house. For the first time in months, it seemed, he felt his burden had lifted a little. Driving to school, he listened to some music on the radio.

During first period art-history class, he lingered over slides of Byzantine paintings. He patiently explained the nuances of detail and motif. He pointed out the emotional power and fitness of the work. But he took so long trying

to place the anonymous artists in their social milieu, that some of his students began to scrape their shoes on the floor, or else clear their throats. They covered only a third of the lesson plan that day. He was still talking when the bell rang.

In his next class, water-color painting, he felt unusually calm and insightful. "Like this, like this," he said, guiding their hands. "Delicately. Like a breath of air on the paper. Just a touch. Like so. See?" he'd say, and felt on the edge of discovery himself. "*Suggestion* is what it's all about," he said, holding lightly to Sue Colvin's fingers as he guided her brush. "You've got to work with your mistakes until they look intended. Understand?"

As he moved down the lunch line in the faculty dining room, he saw Carol a few places ahead of him. She paid for her food. He waited impatiently while his own bill was being rung up. Carol was halfway across the room by the time he caught up with her. He slipped his hand under her elbow and guided her to an empty table near the window.

"God, Carlyle," she said after they'd seated themselves. She picked up her glass of iced tea. Her face was flushed. "Did you see the look Mrs. Storr gave us? What's wrong with you? Everybody will know." She sipped from her iced tea and put the glass down.

"The Hell with Mrs. Storr," Carlyle said. "Hey, let me tell you something. Honey, I feel light years better than I did this time yesterday. Jesus," he said.

"What's happened?" Carol said. "Carlyle, tell me." She moved her fruit cup to one side of her tray and shook cheese over her spaghetti. But she didn't eat anything. She waited for him to go on. "Tell me what it is."

He told her about Mrs. Webster. He even told her about Mr. Webster. How the man'd had to hotwire the truck in order to start it. Carlyle ate his tapioca while he talked. Then he ate the garlic bread. He drank Carol's iced tea down before he realized he was doing it.

"You're nuts, Carlyle," she said, nodding at the spaghetti in his plate that he hadn't touched.

He shook his head. "My God, Carol. God, I feel good, you know? I feel better than I have all summer." He lowered his voice. "Come over tonight, will you?"

He reached under the table and put his hand on her knee. She turned red again. She raised her eyes and looked around the dining room. But no one was paying any attention to them. She nodded quickly. Then she reached under the table and touched his hand.

That afternoon he arrived home to find his house neat and orderly and his children in clean clothes. In the kitchen, Franklin and Sarah stood on chairs, helping Mrs. Webster with gingerbread cookies. Sarah's hair was out of her face and held back with a barrette.

"Daddy!" his children cried, happy, when they saw him.

"Franklin, Sarah," he said. "Mrs. Webster, I—" But she didn't let him finish.

"We've had a fine day, Mr. Carlyle," Mrs. Webster said quickly. She wiped her fingers on the apron she was wearing. It was an old apron with blue windmills on it and it had belonged to Eileen. "Such beautiful children. They're a treasure. Just a treasure."

"I don't know what to say," Carlyle stood by the drainboard and watched Sarah press out some dough. He could smell the spice. He took off his coat and sat down at the kitchen table. He loosened his tie.

"Today was a get-acquainted day," Mrs. Webster said. "Tomorrow we have some other plans. I thought we'd walk to the park. We ought to take advantage of this good weather."

"That's a fine idea," Carlyle said. "That's just fine. Good. Good for you, Mrs. Webster."

"I'll finish putting these cookies in the oven, and by that time Mr. Webster should be here. You said four o'clock? I told him to come at four."

Carlyle nodded, his heart full.

"You had a call today," she said as she went over to the sink with the mixing bowl. "Mrs. Carlyle called."

"Mrs. Carlyle," he said. He waited for whatever it was Mrs. Webster might say next.

"Yes. I identified myself, but she didn't seem surprised to find me here. She said a few words to each of the children."

Carlyle glanced at Franklin and Sarah, but they weren't paying any attention. They were lining up cookies on another baking sheet.

Mrs. Webster continued. "She left a message. Let me see, I wrote it down, but I think I can remember it. She said, 'Tell him—that is, tell you—What goes around, comes around.' I think that's right. She said you'd understand."

Carlyle stared at her. He heard Mr. Webster's truck outside.

"That's Mr. Webster," she said and took off the apron. Carlyle nodded.

"Seven o'clock in the morning?" she asked.

"That will be fine," he said. "And thank you again."

That evening he bathed each of the children, got them into their pajamas, and then read to them. He listened to their prayers, tucked in their covers, and turned out the light. It was nearly nine o'clock. He made himself a drink and watched something on TV until he heard Carol's car pull into the drive.

Around ten, while they were in bed together, the phone rang. He swore, but he didn't get up to answer it. It kept ringing.

"It might be important," Carol said, sitting up. "It might be my sitter. She has this number."

"It's my wife," Carlyle said. "I know it's her. She's losing her mind. She's going crazy. I'm not going to answer it."

"I have to go pretty soon anyway," Carol said. "It was real sweet tonight, honey." She touched his face.

It was the middle of the fall term. Mrs. Webster had been with him for nearly six weeks. During this time, Carlyle's life had undergone a number of changes. For one thing, he was becoming reconciled to the fact that Eileen was gone and, as far as he could understand it, had no intentions of coming back. He had stopped imagining that this might change. It was only late at night, on the nights he was not with Carol, that he wished for an end to the love

he still had for Eileen and felt tormented as to why all of this had happened. But for the most part he and the children were happy; they thrived under Mrs. Webster's attentions. Lately, she'd gotten into the routine of making their dinner and keeping it in the oven, warming, until his arrival home from school. He'd walk in the door to the smell of something good coming from the kitchen and find Franklin and Sarah helping to set the dining room table. Now and again he asked Mrs. Webster if she would care for overtime work on Saturday. She agreed, as long as it wouldn't entail her being at his house before noon. Saturday mornings, she said, she had things to do for Mr. Webster and herself. On these days, Carol would leave Dodge with Carlyle's children, all of them under Mrs. Webster's care, and Carol and he would drive to a restaurant out in the country for dinner. He believed his life was beginning again. Though he hadn't heard from Eileen since that call six weeks ago, he found himself able to think about her now without either being angry, or else feeling close to tears.

At school, they were just leaving the medieval period and about to enter the Gothic. The Renaissance was still some time off, at least not until after the Christmas recess. It was during this time that Carlyle got sick. Overnight, it seemed, his chest tightened and his head began to hurt. The joints of his body became stiff. He felt dizzy when he moved around. The headache got worse. He woke up with it on a Sunday and thought of calling Mrs. Webster to ask her to come and take the children somewhere. They'd been sweet to him, bringing him glasses of juice and soda pop. But he couldn't take care of them. On the second morning of his illness, he was just able to get to the phone to call in sick. He gave his name, his school, department, and the nature of his illness to the person who answered the number. Then he recommended Mel Fisher as his substitute. Fisher was a man who painted abstract oils three or four days a week, sixteen hours a day, but who didn't sell or even show his work. He was a friend of Carlyle's. "Get Mel Fisher," Carlyle told the woman on the other end of the line. "Fisher," he whispered.

He made it back to his bed, got under the covers, and went to sleep. In his sleep, he heard the pickup engine running outside, and then the backfire it made as the engine was turned off. Sometime later he heard Mrs. Webster's voice outside the bedroom door.

"Mr. Carlyle?"

"Yes, Mrs. Webster." His voice sounded strange to him. He kept his eyes shut. "I'm sick today. I called the school. I'm going to stay in bed today."

"I see. Don't worry then," she said. "I'll look after things at this end."

He shut his eyes. Directly, still in a state between sleeping and waking, he thought he heard his front door open and close. He listened. Out in the kitchen, he heard a man say something in a low voice, and a chair being pulled away from the table. Pretty soon, he heard the voices of the children. Sometime later—he wasn't sure how much time had passed—he heard Mrs. Webster outside his door.

"Mr. Carlyle, should I call the doctor?"

"No, that's all right," he said. "I think it's just a bad

cold. But I feel hot all over. I think I have too many covers. And it's too warm in the house. Maybe you'll turn down the furnace." Then he felt himself drift back into sleep.

In a little while, he heard the children talking to Mrs. Webster in the living room. Were they coming inside or going out? Carlyle wondered. Could it be the next day already?

He went back to sleep. But then he was aware of his door opening. Mrs. Webster appeared beside his bed. She put her hand on his forehead.

"You're burning up," she said. "You have a fever."

"I'll be all right," Carlyle said. "I just need to sleep a little longer. And maybe you could turn the furnace down. Please, I'd appreciate it if you could get me some aspirin. I have an awful headache."

Mrs. Webster left the room. But his door stood open. Carlyle could hear the TV going out there. "Keep it down, Jim," he heard her say, and the volume was lowered at once. Carlyle fell asleep again.

But he couldn't have slept more than a minute, because Mrs. Webster was suddenly back in his room with a tray. She sat down on the side of his bed. He roused himself and tried to sit up. She put a pillow behind his back.

"Take these," she said and gave him some tablets. "Drink this." She held a glass of juice for him. "I also brought you some Cream of Wheat. I want you to eat it. It'll be good for you."

He took the aspirin and drank the juice. He nodded. But he shut his eyes once more. He was going back to sleep.

"Mr. Carlyle," she said.

He opened his eyes. "I'm awake," he said. "I'm sorry." He sat up a little. "I'm too warm, that's all. What time is it? Is it eight-thirty yet?"

"It's a little after nine-thirty," she said.

"Nine-thirty," he said.

"Now I'm going to feed this cereal to you. And you're going to open up and eat it. Six bites, that's all. Here, here's the first bite. Open," she said. "You're going to feel better after you eat this. Then I'll let you go back to sleep. You eat this, and then you can sleep all you want."

He ate the cereal she spooned to him and asked for more juice. He drank the juice, and then he pulled down in the bed again. Just as he was going off to sleep, he felt her covering him with another blanket.

The next time he awoke it was afternoon. He could tell it was afternoon by the pale light that came through his window. He reached up and pulled the curtain back. He could see that it was overcast outside; the wintry sun was behind the clouds. He got out of bed slowly, found his slippers, and put on his robe. He went into the bathroom and looked at himself in the mirror. Then he washed his face and took some more aspirin. He used the towel and then went out to the living room.

On the dining room table, Mrs. Webster had spread some newspaper, and she and the children were pinching clay figures together. They had already made some things that had long necks and bulging eyes, things that resembled giraffes, or else dinosaurs. Mrs. Webster looked up as he walked by the table.

"How are you feeling?" Mrs. Webster asked him as he settled onto the sofa. He could see into the dining room area where Mrs. Webster and the children sat at the table.

"Better, thanks. A little better," he said. "I still have a headache, and I feel a little warm." He brought the back of his hand up to his forehead. "But I'm better. Yes, I'm better. Thanks for your help this morning."

"Can I get you anything now?" Mrs. Webster said. "Some more juice or some tea? I don't think coffee would hurt, but I think tea would be better. Some juice would be best of all."

"No, thanks," he said. "I'll just sit here for a while. It's good to be out of bed. I feel a little weak, is all. Mrs. Webster?"

She looked at him and waited. "Did I hear Mr. Webster in the house this morning? It's fine, of course. I'm just sorry I didn't get a chance to meet him and say hello."

"It was him," she said. "He wanted to meet you, too. I asked him to come in. He just picked the wrong morning, what with you being sick and all. I'd wanted to tell you something about our plans, Mr. Webster's and mine, but this morning wasn't a good time for it."

"Tell me what?" he said, alert, fear plucking at his heart.

She shook her head. "It's all right," she said. "It can wait."

"Tell him what?" Sarah said. "Tell him what?"

"What, what?" Franklin picked it up. The children stopped what they were doing.

"Just a minute, you two," Mrs. Webster said as she got to her feet.

"Mrs. Webster, Mrs. Webster!" Franklin cried.

"Now see here, little man," Mrs. Webster said. "I need to talk to your father. Your father is sick today. You just take it easy. You go on and play with your clay. If you don't watch it, your sister is going to get ahead of you with these creatures."

Just as she began to move toward the living room, the phone rang. Carlyle reached over to the end table and picked up the receiver.

As before, he heard faint singing in the wire and knew that it was Eileen. "Yes," he said. "What is it?"

"Carlyle," his wife said, "I know, don't ask me how, that things are not going so well right now. You're sick, aren't you? Richard's been sick, too. It's something going around. He can't keep anything on his stomach. He's already missed a week of rehearsal for this play he's doing. I've had to go down myself and help block out scenes with his assistant. But I didn't call to tell you that. Tell me how things are out there."

"Nothing to tell," Carlyle said. "I'm sick, that's all. A touch of the flu. But I'm going to get better."

"Are you still writing in your journal?" she asked. It caught him by surprise. Several years before, he'd told her that he was keeping a journal. Not a diary, he'd said, a journal—as if that explained something. But he'd never shown it to her, and he hadn't written in it for over a year. He'd forgotten about it.

"Because," she said, "you ought to write something in the journal during this period. How you feel and what you're thinking. You know, where your head is at during

this period of sickness. Remember, sickness is a message about your health and your well-being. It's telling you things. Keep a record. You know what I mean? When you're well, you can look back and see what the message was. You can read it later, after the fact. Colette did that," Eileen said. "When she had a fever, this one time."

"Who?" Carlyle said. "What did you say?"

"Colette," Eileen answered. "The French writer. You know who I'm talking about. We had a book of hers around the house. *Gigi* or something. I didn't read *that* book, but I've been reading her since I've been out here. Richard turned me on to her. She wrote a little book about what it was like, about what she was thinking and feeling the whole time she had this fever. Sometimes her temperature was a hundred and two. Sometimes it was lower. Maybe it went higher than a hundred and two. But a hundred and two was the highest she ever took her temperature and wrote, too, when she had the fever. Anyway, she wrote about it. That's what I'm saying. Try writing about what it's like. Something might come of it," Eileen said and, inexplicably, it seemed to Carlyle, she laughed. "At least later on you'd have an hour-by-hour account of your sickness. To look back at. At least you'd have that to show for it. Right now you've just got this discomfort. You've got to translate that into something usable."

He pressed his fingertips against his temple, and shut his eyes. But she was still on the line, waiting for him to say something. What could he say? It was clear to him that she was insane.

"Jesus," he said. "Jesus, Eileen. I don't know what to say to that. I really don't. I have to go now. Thanks for calling," he said.

"It's all right," she said. "We have to be able to communicate. Kiss the kids for me. Tell them I love them. And Richard sends his hellos to you. Even though he's flat on his back."

"Goodbye," Carlyle said and hung up. Then he brought his hands to his face. He remembered, for some reason, seeing the fat girl make the same gesture that time as she moved toward the car. He lowered his hands and looked at Mrs. Webster, who was watching him.

"Not bad news, I hope," she said. The old woman had moved a chair near to where he sat on the sofa.

Carlyle shook his head.

"Good," Mrs. Webster said. "That's good. Now, Mr. Carlyle, this may not be the best time in the world to talk about this." She glanced out to the dining room. At the table, the children had their heads bent over the clay. "But since it has to be talked about sometime soon, and since it concerns you and the children, and you're up now, I have something to tell you. Jim and I, we're getting on. The thing is, we need something more than we have at the present. Do you know what I'm saying? This is hard for me," she said and shook her head. Carlyle nodded slowly. He knew that she was going to tell him she had to leave. He wiped his face on his sleeve. "Jim's son by a former marriage, Bob—the man is forty years old—called yesterday to invite us to go out to Oregon and help him with his mink ranch. Jim would be doing whatever they do with minks, and I'd cook, buy the groceries, clean house and do anything else that needed doing. It's a

chance for both of us. And it's board and room and then some. Jim and I won't have to worry any more about what's going to happen to us. You know what I'm saying. Right now, Jim doesn't have anything," she said. "He was sixty-two last week. He hasn't had anything for some time. He came in this morning to tell you about it himself, because I was going to have to give notice, you see. We thought, I thought, it would help if Jim was here when I told you." She waited for Carlyle to say something. When he didn't she went on. "I'll finish out the week and I could stay on a couple of days next week, if need be. But then, you know, for sure, we really have to leave, and you'll have to wish us luck. I mean, can you imagine—all the way out there to Oregon in that old rattle trap of ours? Oh, but I'm going to miss these little kids. They're so precious."

After a time, when he still hadn't moved to answer her, she got up from her chair and went to sit on the cushion next to him. She touched the sleeve of his robe. "Mr. Carlyle?"

"I understand," he said. "I want you to know your being here has made a big difference to me and the children." His head ached so much that he had to squint his eyes. "This headache," he said. "This headache is killing me."

Mrs. Webster reached over and laid the back of her hand against his forehead. "You still have some fever," she told him. "I'll get more aspirin. That'll help bring it down. I'm still on the case here," she said. "I'm still the doctor."

"My wife thinks I should write down what this feels like," Carlyle said. "She thinks it might be a good idea to describe what the fever is like. So I can look back later and get the message." He laughed. Some tears came to his eyes. He wiped them away with the heel of his hand.

"I think I'll get your aspirin and juice and then go out there with the kids," Mrs. Webster said. "Looks to me they've about worn out their interest with that clay."

Carlyle was afraid she'd move into the other room and leave him alone. He wanted to talk to her. He cleared his throat. "Mrs. Webster, there's something I want you to know. For a long time my wife and I loved each other more than anything or anybody in the world. And that includes those children. We thought, well, we *knew*, that we'd grow old together. And we knew we'd do all the things in the world that we wanted to do, and do them together." He shook his head. That seemed the saddest thing of all to him now—that whatever they did from now on, each would do it without the other.

"There, it's all right," she said. She patted his hand. He sat forward and began to talk again. After a time, the children came out to the living room. Mrs. Webster caught their attention and held a finger to her lips. Carlyle looked at them and went on talking. Let them listen, he thought. It concerns them, too. The children seemed to understand they had to remain quiet, even pretend some interest, so they sat down next to Mrs. Webster's legs. Then they got down on their stomachs on the carpet and started to giggle. But Mrs. Webster looked sternly in their direction, and that stopped it.

Carlyle went on talking. At first his head still ached,

and he felt awkward to be in his pajamas on the sofa with this old woman beside him, waiting patiently for him to go on to the next thing. But then his headache went away. And soon he stopped feeling awkward and forgot how he was supposed to feel. He had begun his story somewhere in the middle, after the children were born. But then he backed up and started at the beginning, back when Eileen was eighteen and he was nineteen, a boy and girl in love.

He stopped to wipe his forehead. He moistened his lips.

"Go on," Mrs. Webster said. "I know what you're saying. You just keep talking, Mr. Carlyle. Sometimes it's good to talk about it. Sometimes it has to be talked about. Besides, I want to hear it. And you're going to feel better afterwards. Something just like it happened to me once, something like what you're describing. Love. That's what it is."

The children fell asleep on the carpet. Franklin had his thumb in his mouth. Carlyle was still talking when Mr. Webster came to the door, knocked, and then stepped inside to collect Mrs. Webster.

"Sit down, Jim," Mrs. Webster said. "There's no hurry. Go on with what you were saying, Mr. Carlyle."

Carlyle nodded at the old man, and the old man nodded back, then got himself one of the dining room chairs and carried it into the living room. He brought the chair close to the sofa and sat down on it with a sigh. Then he took off his cap and wearily lifted one leg over the other. When Carlyle began talking again, the old man put both feet on the floor. The children woke up. They sat up on the carpet and rolled their heads back and forth. But by then Carlyle had said all he knew to say, so he stopped talking.

"Good. Good for you," Mrs. Webster said when she saw he had finished. "You're made out of good stuff. And so is she—so is Mrs. Carlyle. And don't you forget it. You're both going to be okay after this is over." She got up and took off the apron she'd been wearing. Mr. Webster got up too and put his cap back on.

At the door, Carlyle shook hands with both of the Websters.

"So long," Jim Webster said. He touched the bill of his cap.

"Good luck to you," Carlyle said.

Mrs. Webster said she'd see him in the morning, bright and early as always.

As if something important had been settled, Carlyle said, "Right!"

The old couple went carefully along down the walk and got into their truck. Jim Webster bent down under the dashboard. Mrs. Webster looked at Carlyle and waved. It was then, as he stood at the window waving back, that Carlyle felt something come to an end. It had to do with Eileen and the life before this. Had he ever waved at her? He must have, of course, he knew he had, yet he could not remember just now. But he understood it was over, and he felt able to let her go. He was sure their life together had happened in the way he said it had. But it was something that had passed. And that passing—though it had seemed impossible and he'd fought against

NANCY EIMERS

THE GYPSY MOTH

On invisible thread the scalloped worm
is almost lost to the world
of larger things—corrugated oak trees
just across the street, a swollen Pacer
no one seems to own, though it is your hand
holding the curve of the bumper, forgetting.

Disturbed by breath, the slightest green
wafts in and out of shadows
taking it wholly or leaving it
alone as it swings in our faces,
a detail hard to see
apart from spring, the day around it:
its accordion pull and release
is so slow it seems aimless. Magnified,
its clumsiness might be the graceful

first steps into flight,
though now it is hitching its body pointlessly
toward the lowest branch, still inches
away. In another week the tree will begin
its dying, given leaf by leaf
to the difference between itself and sleep,
which is wings. Clouds film over the sun,
blow over the private

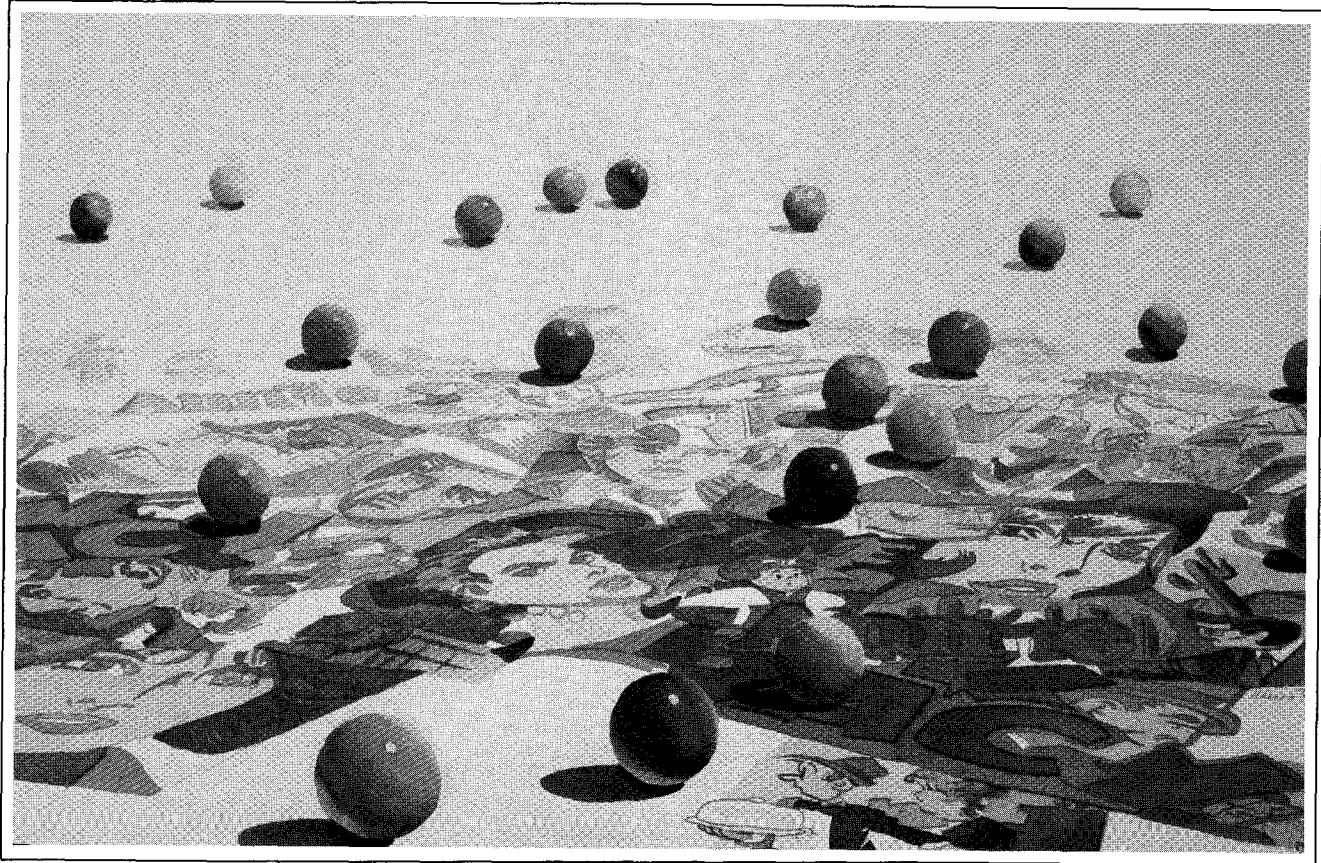
inner white. We don't say
we already miss it, somehow knowing not to,
knowing each other better for idle talk.
The lines cross our faces more finely
each year—what we hope
is a complication, not of touch but the little
we love beyond ownership. The trees let go
of the sky almost effortlessly,
rain on our shoulders and hair, soaking us
back into ourselves, where we can imagine
the fineness
of each other's discomfort, how close
to common air.

it—would become a part of him now, too, as surely as anything else he'd left behind.

As the pickup lurched forward, he lifted his arm once more. He saw the old couple lean toward him briefly as they drove away. Then he brought his arm down and turned to his children. □

JERRY KLINKOWITZ

EDDIE AND THE NIÑA



Jolene is a Class-A shagger. For two hours before each game she sits on the concrete retaining wall beyond the left field fence and chases batting practice balls that make it out. Six or seven do every late afternoon, sometimes a dozen or more, and today has been especially good—fifteen practically new Mid-Continent League balls fill her pockets and batting helmet by six o'clock. Most of them are scuffed just three times: the first which took them out of last night's game, second by the wallop out of the park today, and third for the grass, gravel, or concrete where they hit just now.

The Mason City Royals' GM will pay her a quarter for each ball when she reports her total at the month's end. But tonight she carries a higher mark of distinction, for her hero Eddie Sanmarda has sent a screaming liner to the top of the left field wall, just a foot away from the foul pole, and with a momentum-gaining bounce it's taken a bee-line for Jolene's ankle and stung her good. For a while she mugs it up and walks with an exaggerated limp, but

fifteen minutes before game time it's swelled up and hurts real bad.

A fan takes her to the dugout. "Mr. Patterson," he says to the manager who's worrying over his lineup card, "one of your shaggers caught a line drive on her ankle, maybe the trainer could give her some ice." Carl lifts her over and dream of dreams she's in the Royals' dugout. Chet the trainer pulls down her sock, feels that there's no break, and applies an icepack. He listens to her story then calls Ed over to see his work. Eddie speaks little English but he knows his sockamayocking rampage has hurt this little niña, so he grabs a clean game ball and presents it to her as his first trophy of atonement. Then he chases back to concessions for a hotdog and big orange drink, his spikes clattering on the steel walkway. Bill White the stadium announcer has introduced the managers and umps, the first three hitters, and is waiting on Eddie as he stumbles back through the boxes, so Ed runs out to his position from the stands. Bill is two-thirds down the

lineup and the whole infield is out there before anyone notices Ed standing at second, gloveless, dripping mustard and orange pop on the bag.

That night Mason City wins 6-2, a good game with no errors and three home runs. Ed Sanmarda hits the first but pulls up lame rounding first base. Carl Patterson has to help him around third to home and in minutes his leg is packed in ice. Jolene's still there in all her glory so she bums a quarter from the trainer and fetches Ed a Coke.

If Ed Sanmarda makes the major leagues he'll be the first starting shortstop who can feed an entire team for less than five dollars, another minor league skill gone to waste in the bigs. By mid-June in his first year with Mason City he has fed his teammates, all 23 of them, on eight successive Sundays. Meal money is passed out Monday mornings and it never lasts the week.

Spanish-American cooking? Yes, in a way. But nothing Eddie or his family ate in Panama. His down-and-out enchiladas are purely a concoction of American convenience food, a melange of cheap ingredients chosen after his first half hour in an Iowa food store.

Three packages of super soft tortillas at 69 cents each, full count 24 which answers for every man on the team. A can of mild taco sauce for these soft-mouthed gringos, only 19 cents. A round of Colby cheese, the biggest investment at \$2.44. That leaves thirty cents of his five (hidden in his hatband Monday) for some closed-out jalapeña peppers he's found at the Swiss Colony Gourmet Shop, unquestionably the best food buy in Mason City and perhaps the whole United States. These are for himself, Joey, and Manuel; the Yankee boys tried them once and howled for water, like throwing gasoline on their fires until Eddie told them just to suck on sugar for a while. "Panama Pizzas" Donny Schmidt called them, refusing to roll the tortillas like Eddie showed. One of these babies, a foot long and three inches high when tightly rolled and broiled, keeps their bellies filled from Sunday night to Monday morning, when the meal money comes and it's back to Mac's and Burger King.

Given his relatively few words of English Eddie finds it amazing he can have so many Anglo friends. When the Royals' scout told him he'd start in Mason City his parents were concerned—how would he get along, with whom could he even speak? The scout, a veteran of the Mexican leagues and the majors, assured them there would be other Latin players—Joey Menendez from Cuba by way of Miami, Manuel Moreno from northern Mexico, Monterrey, plus there was Andy Thompson from Ybor City in Tampa, half Spanish, who was majoring in Romance Languages at South Florida—but that even without these Spanish-speaking kids Eddie would find it easy to get along.

Baseball has its own language of movement, the scout explained and Eddie soon found out. On the field the game's natural rhythm of threes—three strikes, three outs, three bases, nine innings, nine players—gave his actions a familiar mold. Playing deep for the first two outs, in on the grass when he expected a bunt, pegging the ball to first and running off the field with his teammates—all this made Ed and the guys partners in a dance which

flowed between the baselines. In the dugout they became a captive audience to the other team's spectacle with its own echo of the same old song.

Warm-ups before the game, the cadence afterward of bagging bats and balls, loading the bus, fifteen minutes back to the motel and then a couple hours' cards or tv before bed. The five months from April through August across eight Midwestern towns flowed easy, like a river, its currents and eddies obvious from the first time around.

Assigned to share a room with Billy Harmon, whose Spanish was as weak as his own English, Eddie found no trouble—their body language carried directly from the field, and as roommates they had more to say to each other than Joey and Manuel or any of the English-speaking pairs. "¿Quieres algunos chips y Pepsi?" Eddie would call from their kitchenette and Billy would nod and answer saying "Sure, bring some cheese if we got some." One night around a darkened motel pool they talked for hours, their voices floating through the dusk like music from another world. Eddie spoke of his parents back home, Billy about the ball he'd played in high school, and though neither knew for sure what the other was saying each felt good about their talk. When Ed and Joey played the infield they laughed and chattered, rattling the batters with their private jokes. But with Eddie at short and Billy at second they played with the quiet of brothers.

Eddie had been signed in August off a sandlot team organized by the United Methodist mission in Panama City. He was nineteen years old and had never played much ball before that summer, favoring Jai-Lai up to then. But the Methodists had been pulling kids off the courts and Reverend Styles, their coach, was so struck by Eddie's natural talent that he wrote every major league club about his find.

Scouts from Kansas City, Chicago, and Toronto answered his letters, and during the All-Star break a man from the Royals flew down. This was the day Eddie hit two home runs and played the infield like a dervish—to show him off Rev. Styles shifted him around every two innings from third to short to second and to first. The scout took his report back to Kansas City on the next plane and three weeks later called with an offer. As a crack infielder who could hit, Ed would be their number one draft pick in November. Report to Sarasota in February for rookie camp, and then depending on the older utility infielders he'd have a spot with Double-A Chattanooga or A-ball's Mason City. \$630 a month American was a fortune in his part of Panama City so Ed gladly signed. The Methodists were right: Jai-Lai would waste him and he was too small for soccer.

In Sarasota he was rudely disappointed. The American players showed off tricks he'd never dreamed of and the coaches ignored his lusterless play. But in the third week when the veteran players came in for workouts the Royal's starting shortstop broke an ankle on a practice slide and everyone moved up a notch—the reserve infielder to short, Neddy Ralston from Triple-A Vancouver to the Kansas City bench, Mason City's shortstop to Chattanooga—and Eddie had the A-ball job by default.

Carl Patterson, the Mason City manager, now gave more attention and liked what he saw. He spent more

time with Eddie, showing him how to watch the ball's rotation: bottom over top a fastball, top over bottom a curve, sideways with a white dot in the middle a slider, which was thrown three-quarter arm as well. Mack Ptaszynski the pitching coach threw ball after ball with Carl catching and calling each of them for Eddie, who was soon sending every one to the wall. Woody Brown, the Chattanooga manager, now watched too, so Carl cut the practice sessions before he lost his man.

On April 2nd camp was broken and the parent team headed up to K.C. for the opener. The farm kids were given the chance to ride along on the charter and Eddie said yes to see his first pro game. He spent three days in Kansas City sick on Yankee food—the players ordered thick rare steaks so he did too and nearly vomited; a steak in Panama means well cooked, cut up beef in rice and bananas. He found a taco stand near the bus station, and even though the putrid little things were made with hamburger he bought his own jalapeña sauce at a nearby Quik-Trip and made them edible.

He rode a bus from Kansas City up to Chicago, twelve hours, just to spend a day walking among the tall buildings on Michigan Avenue. In the Art Institute he prayed before the El Greco's he'd seen in his mother's Catholic missal. At the Y they spoke Spanish, more Spanish than English, and the Honduran clerk told him it was better to pay the ninety bucks and fly to Mason City, bus connections were that bad. On the airline bus he sat with a Mexicana stewardess who took him to the Ozark ticket counter and then all the way to Gate F-11, through this airport bigger and busier than any he'd ever seen. Forty minutes in the air a passenger pointed out the Mississippi, way over its banks at flood stage, and Eddie couldn't believe it wasn't a long, wide lake.

At the Mason City airport, so small and desolate, he was lost. Seeing no buses and afraid of cabs he started walking down the highway toward town. A sheriff's deputy picked him up, saw his baseball gear, and drove him to the Quality Inn where the ball players stayed. Thankfully Carl was in the lobby to book his room. Tomorrow he'd have his apartment with Billy, the blond and baby-faced second baseman who'd been his friend in camp.

April 13th was the home opener, then a second game with Wausau before heading up to Green Bay. Right off the bat Ed was hitting and hitting well, surprising himself in this cold weather when sometimes fewer than fifty fans came out for the night games. Other players were complaining that their hands stung and their joints ached, wanting the managers to shift the weekend games to afternoons, but Ed was in his glory. The night lights made the ball's seams stand out like scars on his uncle's cheeks, and Carl had taught him to watch so well that he routinely sent the fastballs screaming through the hole and lifted a few hanging curves out beyond the wall.

By May 1st he had twenty hits and fifteen RBIs, an amazing clutch percentage. June 1st he was up to 55 and 40, and in one amazing week—June 6-13, against Betten-dorf, Eau Claire, and Green Bay—drove in another fifteen runs, virtually the only Mason City player producing scores. Carl would surely have faced losing him to Chattanooga by now, but Kansas City's All Star shortstop was

coming back and the organization had an extra infielder plugging up the tubes.

Lynn Parson, the hip Black outfielder from Berkeley, California, started telling Eddie about "making his hundred." Poor in English and worse in slang, Eddie groped for the meaning, so Joey came over to explain. One hundred runs batted in is an achievement even in 162 major league games; in A-ball's short season of 120 it is a rare accomplishment indeed. "You gotta make your hundred," Lynn crooned and Eddie got the idea. "Ninety-nine," the Black player sang again, "and a half won't do."

School's out since June 9th and Jolene's been here for batting practice each afternoon. By coming in for the games she risks her job, since the GM wants the shaggers to stay out and chase fouls or home runs. But her ankle still hurts, she tells him, and she can't strain it running in the dark when the teenage beerdrinkers out on the bank give her competition. The GM's New York savvy has been flashing "lawsuit" ever since that line drive nipped her so he doesn't complain. "Are you shagging BP tomorrow night?" he asks and Jolene answers with an impish grin, heading down to play some catch with Ed.

Hitting .340 with all those RBIs exempts Eddie from the team's ribbing, so he's started being more forward with the kid. Johnny Mueller the super-star sits on the outside bench taking love notes from the little girls who scamper back and forth down the grandstand runway. Billy Harmon's perched on the wall, laughing at Johnny and wishing for some adulation of his own. But Jolene is Queen of the Silver Dollar, reigning monarch of the Mason City Park Commission Stadium, where she stands along the baseline tossing balls back and forth with Ed.

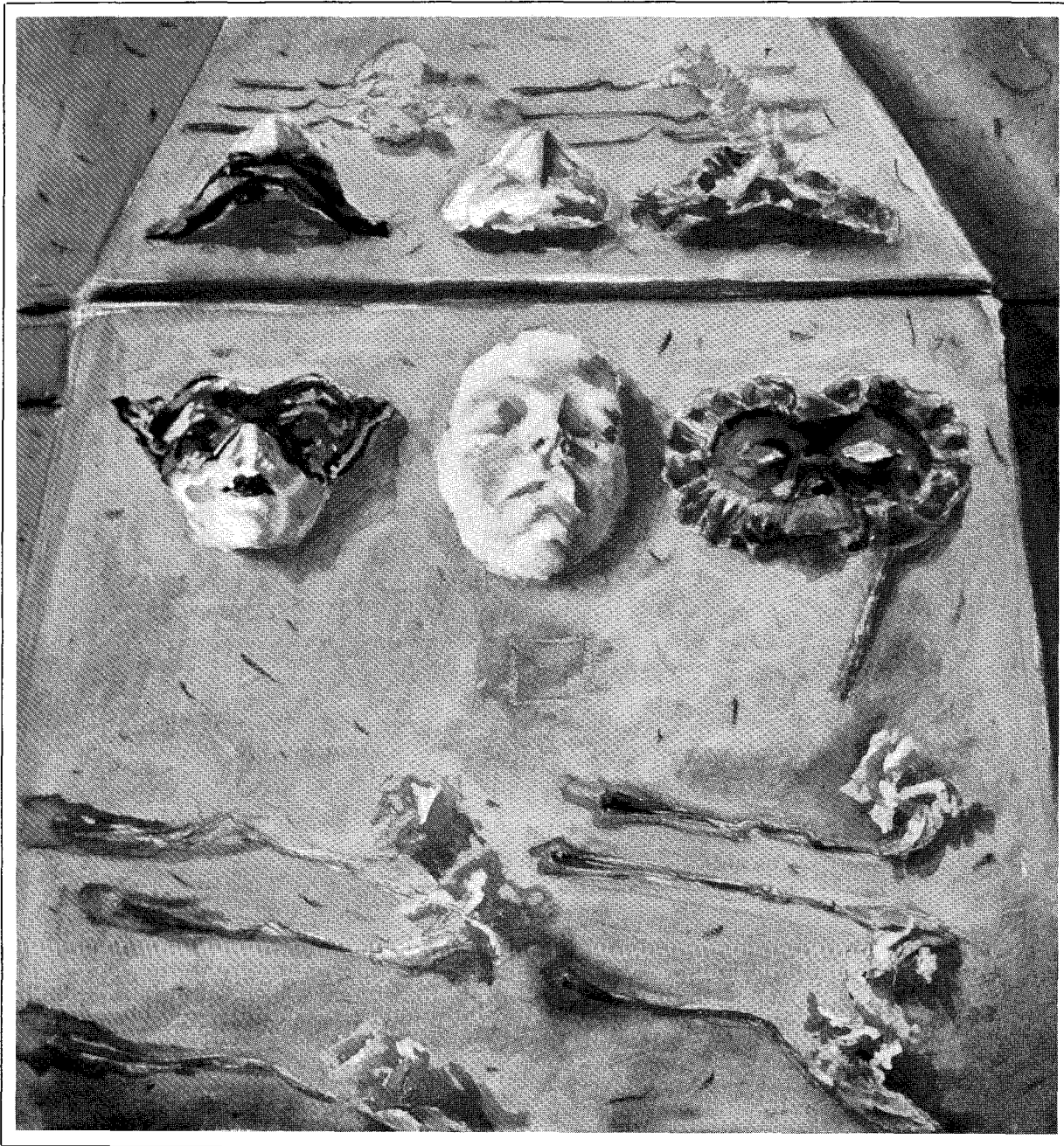
"Eddie," she yells so everyone can hear, "here's my slider," and with her glove she waves that brush-across motion the pitcher makes in warm-ups to indicate a fast breaking ball. "No, no, niña, no no!" Eddie shouts back—kids shouldn't try to throw breaking stuff till their arm's developed, she could hurt herself for life. But Jolene's slider floats in soft as a butterfly, hardly any spin, and Eddie hopes they come at him like this during the game. "Your slider," he tries in English as he flips the ball back, "she is a beeg balloon!" The bench laughs. "OK, nut face," Jolene snarls, and sends a smoking fastball at his groin.

For three nights running Jolene comes in for catch, and after Friday's game she's perched on the dugout roof as the team troops in after a 1-0 win over Cedar Rapids. Eddie's been hitless, a seventeen-game streak broken, but the sight of his little niña cheers him. "Wanna cone?" Jolene asks, and Eddie, puzzled, looks to Andy Thompson who says "Helado, man, helado. 'Cept it ain't helado."

There's a Dairy Dream just three blocks from the ball park and Eddie, who rarely carries money, reaches into the deep lining of his fine broad hat for Sunday's five.

"And what does your daddy want?" the lady asks as she hands the girl her Chocolate Whip special, and Jolene doubles over in a barely held laugh, snickering up at Eddie with that twisted impy smile that's been haunting all his dreams. □

Molly Giles
SELF-DEFENSE



It is May today, warm and so summery that I ruin every form letter I type. By noon there is a golden gleam to the dark office walls, and by late afternoon the city air smells distinctly like roses. I open all the windows and lean out to breathe. "Wasting time again," David says, shaking his head, and I have to admit that I am, that I do,

that time and I are at odds. Surely yesterday was October? And the day before, June? "Just so long as you're not planning to jump," David says. "I'd have nothing pretty to look at in here if you jumped." I turn from the window astonished, and David scowls at me and blushes.

David is my boss; he is also my friend; he is

twenty-seven and I am thirty-eight so friendship was indicated, right from the start; he listens, sad-faced, to my jokes, and I listen, yawning, to his advice; we agree completely on the essential uselessness of McVeigh, Stone, and Farland; we eat lunch together in the park on fine days and play chess in the Employees' Lounge when it rains; we loan each other scratched Frank Sinatra records and talk about things we'd do if we didn't have to work. We have what David calls a "fellowship," and so this compliment (pretty to look at?) confuses me. I ignore it. I tell David that only a moron would jump from a window; I go further; I ask him if he knows anything about morons or their motivation. I find I am hiding my face from the light as I ask this, however. Amanda has said I look old in sunlight. "You look," Amanda has said, "like somebody's mother."

I am, in fact, Amanda's mother, and have been now for seventeen years—a long time, even I know that—and another good reason to stay friends with someone as young as David. David, still scowling, rises from his desk and places his smooth brown hand next to mine on the windowsill. "Oh come on, Jill," he says. "I don't believe it. You're really going to tell me an old moron joke?"

Of course I am. I know so many. David sighs as I tell him the moron jumped out the window because he wanted to paint the town red. "No one paints the town red any more," he points out. He looks at me. "Why date yourself when you could date someone else?" He grins. His own jokes are even feebler than mine. "'Gone with the Wind' is playing downtown; that's about your speed; want to go see it? With me? Sometime?"

I shrug and nod and say Sure. Then there's the moron, I say, my voice very quick, who went all the way to New York City and jumped off the Empire State Building so he could make a big splash on Broadway, and then there's the moron who threw a pound of butter out the window so he could see a butterfly, and there's always the moron, my favorite, who threw a clock off the cliff because he wanted to know if time itself could fly. . . . "Tonight?" David says. "What are you doing tonight, for instance?"

Tonight I have to drive Amanda someplace—for a moment I'm so flustered I can't remember what place and then I do—tonight's her night for Self-Defense. I'm very sorry, I tell David. I turn my palm up on the windowsill so he won't notice how red and wrinkled my knuckles are.

"Can't she drive herself?" David asks.

The thought of Amanda driving makes me shudder. Oh no, I say. Amanda? No.

"She's old enough, isn't she?" David persists.

Amanda's old enough, I agree. It's just that . . . well, Amanda's a poet of sorts, and not very practical; she's usually lost in some book or some dream and I just wouldn't trust her behind the wheel of a car, not yet.

"So you're still tied down," David nods, and he says it with such finality that all the way home I think about this, and wonder if he's right. It's been two years now since Amanda's father left to marry one of his students and while I no longer cry at odd intervals during the day, I have not yet begun to feel the giddy freedom that being single is supposed to bring, either. Partly it's my job, which is just that, a job, and not a "career," and partly it's because I

do, David's right, feel responsible for Amanda. But look at Amanda. Who wouldn't feel responsible?

Here she is, my seventeen year old daughter, lying on the front porch of our house in her black bikini as I come home from work. Her hands are crossed over her heart. There are dead and dying flowers in her hair. Her toenails are painted three shades of purple. When she sees me coming she flattens along the porch and says, "What's the password? No, don't even stop to think about it. And don't look at me either. I'll tell you. Today's password is 'fat'."

"You look like Ophelia," I say, stepping over her with my arms full of groceries.

"Was Ophelia fat?"

"She had other problems, Amanda."

Amanda groans and rolls over. "I wish," Amanda says. That's all she says. I look down at her and then I look past her into the garden. I am delighted to see that the old yellow rose bush has once again burst into gala festoons against the unpainted fence. I should have gone out with David, I think. What harm could it have done? We would have had a fine, friendly time together.

"What a beautiful time of year this is," I say, holding the groceries in my arms like a dance partner.

"It just makes me lonely," Amanda replies. "It just makes me want to die." She reaches for the book propped under her head, opens it, and begins to read. It is a book of poems about suicide; the woman who wrote it smiles cleverly over a cigarette from the dust jacket; she is dead now. "I love this part," Amanda says, and reads a line out loud, but I am thinking instead of Amanda's poem, the one she showed me after her father's last phone call. "How will Death come? Like salt on my tongue," Amanda's poem read.

"You're getting awfully morbid," I start to say, but the phone is ringing, and it might be for me, it might be David saying he's lied about his age from the start. But the voice is Lena's, bright and too cheerful.

"Don't tell me," Lena says, "that Amanda actually is letting someone else talk on the telephone for once. What's the matter? Is she off her feed?"

"She seems preoccupied with death today," I say. I pour a glass of Chablis and stand by the phone and listen to Lena, who lives, like me, alone with a teenager, and whose teenager is changing, as mine is changing, into someone new, unknown, and not entirely likeable.

"He acts more like his father every day," Lena says for the third time, and then, abruptly, "Let's go out, Jill. 'Gone with the Wind' is playing downtown; let's go see it. It will cheer us up, remind us of what it was like when men were men and women weren't. Don't you want some romance in your life?"

I do, I admit it. But I can't go out. I have to take Amanda to Self-Defense.

"What on earth does Amanda need a class in self-defense for?" Lena wonders. "You and I are the ones who need care and protection."

"What *do* you need a self-defense class for?" I ask Amanda at dinner.

"Credit," Amanda says. She reaches for the salt and shakes it over everything on her plate. "I flunked Driver's Ed, remember, and then I had to take an incomplete in

Foods, and then they cancelled my Human Diseases and Insect Psychology classes so this is the only class I can take. It's worth five school credits. I need it to graduate."

"What happened to World History?" I ask. "What happened to Geometry? Literature? Latin? Physics?"

"Get with it, lady," Amanda says. She snaps her fingers and smiles. The phone rings again, and again it's not David. Amanda talks in the pressured, giggling, explosive vocabulary she uses with her friends. She plays with the salt shaker as she talks, shaking salt onto the table and drawing stars and exclamation points in it. I take the salt away at last and hide it in the cupboard; I sponge the table, do the dishes, sweep the floor. Fool, I hear Lena saying in my head. We're the ones who need care and protection.

I decide to take a bath before driving Amanda back to the high school. I close the bathroom door, run the cool water. I lean back in the tub, slowly soaping, looking at the broken veins in my legs, the silver zigzag stretch marks down my belly, the brown bumps on my nipples. Where did my body collect all these scars? Some of them are as old as Amanda, but others—bruises, calluses, scabs—are defects I have failed to see before. I wonder what David would think of this body. Something pretty to look at? I don't think so. No. I don't. Not even David could say something so courtly, and yet, I think, turning one ankle back and forth in the air, the legs aren't so bad, the breasts haven't fallen, perhaps, in the dark . . .

"Mom?" Amanda says, outside the door. "I have to be there in half an hour. If you don't want to drive me though, I can probably find a ride."

"With whom?"

"I don't know. Someone."

"Are you talking about hitchhiking, Amanda?"

Amanda doesn't answer. I narrow my eyes and sink up to my chin in the water. "Because if you are . . ."

I still have not recovered from the shock of seeing Amanda standing by the freeway; she was wearing her flowered hat and my new sandals and she was walking backwards with her thumb stuck out. At first I didn't recognize her; I just thought, There's a dumb girl looking for trouble. She recognized me, of course, at once, and the minute I braked she tried to run. I had to drag her inside the car, my nails deep in her arm. I remember how our voices rose, high and frightened, tangled in accusation and protest by the side of the roadway.

"Mom?" she says again. "Are you going to drive me or not?"

"You know I am."

"I know," Amanda agrees.

My chin sinks lower into the cool unclean water as Amanda, humming, moves down the hallway to change in her room.

It is still light and still warm and the air still smells like roses when we leave. Amanda throws herself over the back of the car seat to unroll the windows. The old station wagon shakes as she churns at the handles. She is wearing too much make-up and too little clothing; but I don't notice this until I've pulled out of the driveway. "Don't tell me," she says, folding her arms, "You think I look fat."

"It's not fat," I say, glancing again at the torn shorts, the short black sweater worn without a bra, the strand of pink plastic pearls, the frizzed hair with the yellow rose stuck in it, the mascara, the lip gloss. "It's not fat," I repeat, "it's . . ."

But Amanda strikes her bare knee with her fist before I can form the old-fashioned word "cheap."

"Look at that," she says, of her knee, which is round and brown and simple. "Doesn't that make you sick? It makes me sick," Amanda says. "I hate my whole body. Sometimes I wish I were a cloud. Then I could float away. Or a mountain. I look fat as a mountain."

We drive in silence, thinking of Amanda, in pink pearls, becoming a mountain. I see her volcanic on the front porch, in her bikini, blocking the door. "I am a pimple oozing purple pus," one of her poems read. "I am a sty in a dead pig's eye."

Amanda strikes her knee again. "I can't wait until next year," she says.

"What happens next year?"

"I'll be eighteen. I'll be free. I can do what I want. I think I'll just take off and travel."

"Travel where?"

"You know," Amanda says. "Around."

"And how will you support yourself?"

"I can always find a job," Amanda says, her voice trailing away. "I can wait tables. Or be a cowgirl. Maybe I could be a field worker. I've always wanted to be a field worker."

"Amanda."

"I'm not going to college, that's all I know. So let's not talk about it now. I hate it when you want to talk about things. I wish . . ." Amanda says. She smooths down her shorts, leans over, and kisses me quickly as I let her out in front of the high school. "The class is over in two hours," she says. For a second she looks worried. "Don't forget me."

I watch her walk across the grass. She walks as she has walked since she was ten months old, with her hands fanned out as if she were balancing on a high wire, and her back straight, and her beautiful knees slightly stiff. Other women are also walking across the grass. Some are my age, some are even younger than Amanda, little girls in pigtails. They all look expectant, as if the class they are going to is fun. I wonder what I shall do, this warm May night, for fun. I certainly do not feel like wrestling a bunch of other women in a classroom for credit. That is not my idea of fun. Nor, I realize, is going home to an empty house. There isn't time for a movie and there's too much time to just sit in a cafe nursing a coffee. I decide to call Lena and see if she wants to meet me; we could sit in a bar somewhere and talk; I want to talk; I want to tell someone about David. I want to explain that what happened caught me by surprise; in my surprise I thought he felt more than "fellowship" for me, and so of course I had to act stern and maternal, to discourage him. And now, I will tell Lena, I feel like a fool. A real moron.

The first phone booth I find is outside a corner grocery store; it smells of spilled soda pop and beer. Teenage boys in swimsuits gather outside the store as I dial Lena's

number; their voices are unhappy and teasing; their bodies are perfect. Lena is not home and as I hang up and step back onto the street I realize I am completely invisible to the boys on the sidewalk. I wonder if they would see me if I were Amanda's age, and I smile, because I know they would, and this seems odd, for I truly feel no different now than I did at seventeen. At seventeen I was just as absent-minded, just as unambitious, just as overwhelmed by the odor of roses. I said "I wish" all the time, like Amanda does, and I wrote poems too—but such conventional poems, about gypsies, and moonlight, and storms at sea. I never wrote about pus in a pig's eye. It never occurred to me to hate my knees. I would have been terrified to hitchhike and I would never have shown my poems to my mother as Amanda, almost aggressively, shows them to me.

I get in the car, start the engine, and drive halfway down the broad bare block before I realize, again, that I have nowhere to go, nothing to do. What will it be like next year, if Amanda does leave home? What will it be like when I'm not "still tied down?" Will I be caught up in some mad social whirl of being wined and dined by twenty-seven year olds? Oh I doubt it; I do indeed doubt it. Maybe, though, I'll finally quit my job and take the time to think about finding work I enjoy. Maybe I'll go back to school and finish my degree. I might even follow Amanda's lead, and sell the house and travel. Travel? Amanda? I see my dazed, lazy, garlanded daughter as a waitress in Denver, a motel maid in Dallas. She has never worked. She flunks courses in school. She can't even drive.

"Don't worry about me," Amanda says.

"Worry about yourself," Lena advises.

Well, I am. Alone in my car, going nowhere slowly down a street in broad daylight, I am worried about myself. Yesterday I was seventeen; tomorrow, at this rate, I'll be seventy. Time is going by too fast, and it doesn't seem to be taking me with it. I pass the park Amanda played in as a baby; other children play there now while other mothers watch. I reach for the radio and snap it on. The station I like plays old songs but at the sound of Frank Sinatra crooning "Angel Eyes" I snap it off again. David's eyes change color in the light; they changed from green to hazel to yellow when he said, "Tonight? What are you doing tonight, for instance?" It was that yellow that stopped me; I'm cautious; I slow. Old lines from my own adolescence came into my mind: Don't get involved. Don't get hurt. What if David tried to touch me, I think. Would I remember how to touch back? Lena said all she could do was lie still and cry when she took her first lover; he never called again and after a week of waiting she drove to the beach. "The boy was with his father," she told me, "so I lay in the sun all day and when it was time to go home I couldn't go home. I sat on the sand and watched the sun set and then I sat on, unable to move. I stayed there all night. I was afraid if I got up I'd walk straight into the sea and disappear. I was afraid no one would miss me if I did disappear."

Driving away from the sea, I end up at the library. I park and go in. I will read something light for pleasure on this warm golden night. I choose two novels, but I can't

concentrate on either. At last I settle in the reading room and flip through magazines. I mean to read an article in the *National Geographic*; I mean to study *Time*. Instead I find myself staring at page after page of a fashion magazine. I read an article about cancer of the cervix and another about plastic surgery and another about the poet Amanda likes, who killed herself when her husband left her. I feel I have read these articles before, often before. When I look up it's dark outside, and when I stand I see my own reflection in the reading room windows. With my ruffled hair and shadowed eyes I look like somebody's mother.

Amanda's classroom is brightly lit and from the cries and cheers coming from the open door it's apparent the class isn't over yet. As I cross the grass and come to the door I see Amanda in the center of the room, with the women circled around her. She is holding her hands out like a tightrope dancer and her knees are stiff. A man comes up behind her. "Our cop," the little girl in pigtails whispers to me. "He helps teach the course. His name is Teddy, and he is a real bear."

"Hello, baby," the policeman says, and lunges for my daughter. Amanda screams and I scream too. The little girl laughs. "Watch this," the little girl says. The man grabs Amanda around the neck and starts to twist her backwards toward the floor. Amanda's mouth opens wide, terrified, her teeth flash, her arms swing helplessly. Rose petals scatter from her hair. As she twists to spin free her pearls break and bounce over the floor, and her sweater lifts briefly over chubby bare breasts. In another second she is free, running with an angry, satisfied look on her face that doesn't change even when she turns and whacks her hip against a desk. The policeman wipes his face, grins, and says, "Good girl. You made it this time. Next?"

A blonde woman about my age steps forward. As Teddy the Bear twists her arm and forces her easily toward the floor, I look around the room. It is an ordinary classroom, with a sink and rows of low tables. A poster on the bulletin board says, "The Devil Made Me Do It." A myna bird in a cage by the window emits a low, worldly whistle as the women scream, "Kick him! Scratch him! Bite!" Amanda moves happily over the floor on her hands and knees, picking up pearls. The little girl helps her.

"And now," the policeman is saying, "here's what to do if someone tries to force you into their car. Say you're walking along the roadway and someone tries to grab you. You ought to know how to break their hold."

Amanda, crouching on the floor, looks up to watch the policeman. I watch Amanda.

"Next week," Amanda says as we cross the grass toward the parking lot, "we're getting a new cop to work with. We need experience with different physiques. This new cop is supposed to be tall and faster than Teddy." She sighs, content. "And what did you do?" she asks me. I tell her I went to the library and read magazines. "Old mom," Amanda says. She pats my waist. "Good old mom."

The way she says this makes me so angry I stop. Amanda, humming, stops beside me. I am aware of her height, her weight, her physical strength as we stand facing each other in the dark. She is grown up, I think. She is almost as tall as her father.

"I'm glad I told you about my plans," Amanda continues dreamily. "It's going to be so great when I go. I've decided I'm going to move to the desert and write poetry there; at first I thought the beach but then I thought, Nope, I don't want anyone seeing me in a bathing suit. In the desert you can wear a caftan and no one has to know how fat you are."

"In the defense class you can wear a bra," I snap. "So no one has to know how naked you are."

"Mom!" Amanda says, shocked.

"I think you dress like a tramp," I say, throwing caution to the wind. "And I'd like to know how you think you're going to get to the desert or anyplace else without me to drive you."

"What's the matter with you?" Amanda says. "Getting there is the least of my worries."

"Oddly enough," I tell her, "it's the very first worry of mine." I hand her the car keys.

"What are those for?"

"We're going to have a driving lesson. Here, in the parking lot."

"I don't want to take a driving lesson now, Mom. I flunked Driver's Ed. Remember? Besides, it's dark."

"Get in."

"No. Come off it. Please. It's late. I'm hot. I'm really tired, Mother."

"I'm tired too." I hear my voice rise, shrill in the darkness, and I hear the truth of the words inside the shrillness—the truth I've been fighting off with moron jokes and form letters and solicitude for Amanda. I'm tired, and I'm depressed, and I'm lonely, and I'm mad, and I'm scared to death of almost everything in the world—and I don't want to stay like this too much longer. I want to bloom, soon; I want to touch and be touched. I turn my back on Amanda, open the car door, and sit down hard in the passenger's seat; it seems strange to sit here again after all these years; it makes me feel vulnerable, it makes me feel small. I cross my arms and wait. At last Amanda, silent, slips in beside me and grips the wheel.

"Okay," she says. "Since you want to die."

"I don't want to die," I assure her. The scent of sweat and roses fills the car as I show her where the headlights are, and how the brakes release, and how to change the radio to a rock and roll station. She grinds the key in the ignition and we start off with a lurch.

"This is going to take a long, long time," Amanda warns. Arms crossed, tired to the bone, I tell her that's fine; time means nothing to me. □

WALTER MCDONALD

LIVING ON HARDCRABBLE

Hunting on hardscrabble, a man keeps his rifle steady, safety ready to flick off and fire. You don't get many shots out here. Long tubes of cactus, the flat flesh of prickly pears, loose rocks that trip you up

every step of the way. No one but a fool would hunt like this except for meat. Six days a week punching holes in this stone. I drill where they send me. My trailer house squats on this desert like an old woman

taking a rock from her shoe. I saw my kids invent a game after the schoolbus dropped them by the side of the road and roared off back to town, the first time I had seen them in a week. He loves me, they said in turn, he

loves me not, snapping off thorns like pulling needles. When I was their age my logger father moved us near a forest, the thickest woods I ever saw, the new pines trunk to trunk for miles, stunted, their stubby branches snagged,

shoving for room. His crew cut through the trees for weeks and never left our sight. He said the virgin woods where he grew up were like a circus tent, the trees massive, scattered, only their top branches touching, a green roof

shutting off the light so no shrubs grew, the forest like the stillness before dawn. He said a boy could ride a horse for hours at full gallop and easily avoid the trees, or silently stalk bear or game downwind,

the layers of leaves soft as fur, the forest like an aviary, the branches bright with song. He never found the time to take me hunting. My only rides were moves to other woods. He cut the trees because he had to live,

like me. But I forgave him years ago. The pine that broke back into him, high branches caught in a noose of limbs and swaying, cracked all his ribs like match sticks. I never saw him again, except chin up, in the coffin.

Climbing over these loose stones, I keep a tight balance between thorns, counting back to pine needles, like my daughters squeezing a desert cactus in their hands, their eyes pulling the sharp facts like petals.

AMELIE WALMSLEY HOW RASPUS GOT BAYOU



I came to this bayou to die, and I been here twenty years. I don't know what got into me; I got here and sat down in this cabin to think about how I was going to kill myself, and I got interested in this fly. It wasn't one of your ordinary houseflies—it was a big green and blue shit fly, the kind you see a lot around animals. And I got to thinking I should get myself a horse.

I didn't have enough money for that so I got a dog from this lady down the road owns a dog farm. Just a common mutt, but all the same a dog. He settled in next to my chair and the rest is history.

In the early morning is when the bayou is best. I never liked it any other way. The sun comes through the trees and lights on the water and you think the sun is coming up for the first time on earth. Everything is new. The cypress stumps look something like they been carved out of the scaffold of earth, the shapes are so fantastic. I get in my pirogue and just go. I don't go anyplace special. Just see things. I feel like the first man, it's all wet and trembly like it was just born. That was another reason I stayed.

When I was a kid I was hooked on animals. I used to catch creatures in a cage made of matchsticks and let them go time it got dark. I felt like god. Hell, there wasn't nothing else to do in those days. One time I caught me a devil horse. You know, the kind of big ugly grasshopper with a black body painted red and yellow like an Indian made up for war. Big things they are too. I caught this one and I couldn't let it go. By then I was afraid of it. Sister Tomlin says he sucked out my soul and left only the husk. Ever since I been possessed.

Rabies. It was the only thing would make me kill an innocent animal. My dog Farina come down with it, it was just pitiful. I didn't have a gun so I poisoned her. It was real fast. She started shaking all over, clicking and going

through the death rattle. I could hear her toenails on the floor. Then she stopped. Wasn't nothing to it. The man at the store give me the poison say I have to report to the authority what I used it for. Hell, what else can you use poison for but to poison something?

Priest came by to see me the other day. Started talking about saving my soul. But I knowed him. I seen his eyes. They were the color of pus and he kept moving his hands like he had a gun hid. I wish he had of. I could have used it on Farina. They buried her down by the bayou, in the old sugar kettle. I thought I never saw such a beautiful evening.

I never got me another dog, that one was enough. Hear, I got me that one figuring it would make me want to live. What else happens but Farina gone and died on me. But she did the trick I guess. I'm still here. I don't much want anything else. I bought me a harmonica at Mulls in town. It was a D. I taught myself to play and now I sit up all day in this abandoned barge sunk by the bridge. I play and play. One day a man come. Say the barge was condemned and any minute would sink. I better get off, he said. Hell, what did I care if it sunk or not? I got a lot of pleasure from it. I still go there occasions. That's when I'm not with Tavey.

Tavey and me hit it off real good. He was a lost kid and I was a lost old man. Not so old Tavey said I didn't have to do my share. I got us a shrimp boat so we could make a living. Tavey was a born fisherman. One day Tavey call me up to the shack. Old man, he said, what am I going to call you? Call me nothing I said. I don't want a name. A name is how it gets started. Next thing you know you have an identity. No way I wanted a name. But Tavey wouldn't have it that I was called nothing. I'll call you Raspus he

said. That was that. I couldn't tell him what after that, he got so bossy. Bought himself a pirogue like mine so he could trail me through the bayou without touching land. He was a fast one too. And only eight years old. Before he run off.

I remember sitting on the porch hearing the bullfrogs creaking in the dark. All around me voices say old man Rasmus the boy done run off. But did I listen? I got in my pirogue and went looked for him. Maybe something got to him before I did. He said his mother was a gris gris woman from New Orleans. So you never know, maybe it was her.

Next I'm sitting on the porch and this man comes up wearing alligator shoes. The toes so pointed I thought for a second two gators was sleeping beneath my chair. Get up he says. I don't move. I open one eye. Do you know this person? He holds out a picture. Person, what kind of a word is that? Sure I know him. That's Tavey. Tavey who, he asks. I wouldn't know more than that, I say. He was always and only Tavey. He's wanted for murder, the man says. If you see him. I won't recognize him I say. Well in case you do. I leaned back and closed my eyes again and went to sleep. I didn't want to get mixed up in it. I know it was true.

Everything you love comes to grief sooner or later so it might as well be sooner. Tavey only eight years old. It put me in the mind of my mother when I was eight years old. She was a beautiful woman. Had hair down to here and eyes that laughed. One day she married. I suppose it was my pa. After the chivari they found her in the bayou. Skirts floating around her head. Pa got scared and ran off. There was just me and her left and she was dead. A man came and said the prayer. Maybe he was a priest. I followed him for seven days and at the end he turned to me and said sonny I don't want you following me. I got my life. So? I says. I didn't see it. I thought now she was dead he would take me. But he never. I just grew up and grew some more. I kept on growing until it was time to stop.

Nobody has to tell you things. I walk through the swamp in my bare feet and I pull knowledge up and out of the earth. That's the only way. Then I let it simmer all through my body. I did that all one day and came back with a wife. Glendeen was like nothing you ever saw on earth. She already had three children. I asked where they come from and she said they grew by the swamp. One of them was all white, like he never saw light. His left eye was red. He was my favorite of Glendeen's children. That was until some lady come with a man and they took all of them away. Glendeen I still see running up with her hands still wet from the bayou. She was doing the wash. Ran after them two in the road and got in the car and took the children. Sent me a card later from Florida. Very happy doing fine. Now what was that supposed to mean. I didn't even know what the picture was of. I never even kissed her.

Like I said, I came here for a purpose and I don't intend to leave before. I wait for God but he don't wait for me. He's got enough to do. I figure one of these days it will happen and I'll wake up. Instead of being in my chair I'm going to be in the bayou. Sucking up water by the roots. I'm going to be one of them cypress trees with a big sad knothole. That's how you'll know who I am. □

NANCY ESPOSITO

SHAPESHIFTING

You are not familiar in that shape,
south light glinting off you so that
I cannot tell if you are solitaire

or fractured mirror. But avert
my eyes and you are a diorama
in amber, rivers running to sea, drying

beds of resin, molding this cosmology
of you, the browns and russets
of your evolution. And you have a grammar,

the solecism of your eyes moving
from the arcane libraries you include
to me, sitting in the leather chair,

reading. In any language but ours
there are differences in you, the thief who
steals the crystalline hour of the wolf

and waves it as scepter or wand.
An afternoon in February, the sky bored
with its reflection in city streets,

the late shadow of winter that you transform
into dogwood and forsythia, bunches
of cinnamon fern that you leave at my door.

LOUIS COXE

CONSTELLATION

Brimful of horizon trees the north well
tips out stars, great winter bear
skinned, nailed to the north wall,
and I watch that slide screened inside my head.
No one goes out there, ever—never will,
never the same space we drift in twice.
Feet apart upright pinned to the ground
I watch stars stream out from a well,
dead souls, explorers racing for a pole.

Bobbie Ann Mason
NEW GROUND



While Ivaline has been cleaning out the henhouse, a hen has been determined to lay an egg in a corner under the roost instead of using a nest box. Ivaline chases it out, but each time she returns from taking a wheelbarrow load of manure to the compost pile, the hen is there again, staring at her fiendishly. This time, when Ivaline returns, the chicken has completed its task, and it stands there, shielding the egg with a lowered wing. It is so hard to see a hen in the act of laying an egg that sometimes Ivaline catches herself believing that it is magic. But once she saw a sick hen struggling to deliver an impacted egg. Unsuccessful, it died not long afterward.

When the hen flutters away, cackling, Ivaline puts the egg in the nest. The egg has a thread of sticky liquid like semen on its surface, but it dries before her eyes. Ivaline's nose is filled with dust. She sneezes and blows her nose—black stains on the handkerchief. The dog looks at her curiously, then lies down by a tree while she shovels manure into the wheelbarrow.

The season is baffling. Ivaline is surprised by the soft electric air, as though she has not really noticed springtime before. Spring has always meant only a sudden rush of hard work, and this year is no exception. Her husband Earl has spent most of the month fighting the spring runoff, building up the creek banks with brush and leaves so that the cornfields will not wash away. And he has had trouble shoring up the levee of the lake he hired a customdozer to dig last fall. It is not really a lake, but Earl likes to call it that. The levee is muddy, and it is still too wet to plow the fields. February was strangely wet and cold. Only a week ago, a sudden snow squall blanketed the ground in minutes, but then the sun came out and melted the snow quickly—all except for the snow in the shadows.

For a while, the shadows of trees were outlines filled in with snow, perfect tree-shaped designs of snow, like Christmas cookies lying around on the ground. But now the March-flowers are in full bloom. Their youngest son Mike calls them daffodils. He works in a hardware store, where they sell fancy Dutch bulbs.

When she gets the wheelbarrow filled, the dog follows her to the garden. Ivaline dumps the manure onto the compost pile and backs off from the smell. Her shoulder aches from being out in the chilly wind yesterday. She raked leaves while Earl went to a cattle sale. Earl no longer has cows, but he can't resist going to the stockyards, just to look. When Ivaline was raking, Mike came by and helped her for a while, an unusual thing for him to do. It was his afternoon off. His wife was at the beauty parlor and had taken their daughter Jennifer with her. Mike smoked a cigarette, and Ivaline watched the wind blow the smoke away and in the same gust scatter leaves around his feet. She watched Mike grind out the cigarette on a patch of new green moss. He stomped a puffball, and together they watched the brown dust fly.

“Linda Lee’s going to have another baby,” Mike said. He let loose an armload of leaves, then jumped into the pile. But it wasn’t for joy. That was a diversion, to fool Ivaline. She didn’t speak for a while, but then she told him, in a quiet voice, “You liked to knocked the props out from under me.”

"I thought you'd be glad."

"How on earth will you manage?" Ivaline cried.

"I don't know," Mike took out another cigarette. He smoked Marlboro Golds. "They might let me work behind the counter," he said. "That pays better."

Ivaline raked leaves briskly into the pile. She nudged

the rake forward on the grass to loosen a glob of oak leaves stuck in the teeth. She said, "You'll have to come back home then. You won't be able to pay all that rent in town—and feed an extra mouth."

"The timing's bad, but Jennifer's already two, and we didn't want to have them too far apart."

"I bet," Ivaline muttered, but Mike did not hear. He had grabbed up an enormous load of leaves and was carrying them to the leaf bin. One day he was a little boy playing basketball in the backyard, and the next day he telephoned from Louisville to say he had eloped with Linda Lee Mullins. At the time, what surprised Ivaline most was that they had driven all the way to Louisville before telling the news. Later, Ivaline and Earl found out that Linda Lee had been pregnant, and Mike had been too scared to admit it to them in person.

Mike said, "I might get on at the paint factory over yonder."

"And breathe fumes?"

Mike twirled the bamboo rake like a baton. "This rake ain't no 'count," he said. "I can get you one on discount at the store if you want me to."

"I can fix it. That handle just needs taping."

Ivaline continued to rake, attacking the leaves vigorously, as though they were one thing she could control. "We could fix up the upstairs for you," she said after a while, knowing that Mike and Linda Lee wanted to live in town.

Mike said, "If it's a boy, I want to name it Jason. She likes Jeff, but I like Jason."

Ivaline leaned against her rake and said with a sigh, "Well, don't that beat a chicken worming?"

"What does that mean?"

"It's just an expression. Just something you say at a time like this." She scooped up leaves and took them to the bin. She trailed leaves behind her. Turning back to face Mike, she said, "Didn't you ever see a chicken going along rooting up worms?"

That evening, her arms and shoulder ached fiercely. "I gave myself arthritis out in that wind raking," she told Earl.

Earl helped her soak her shoulder with hot, wet washcloths. When they went to bed, he got out the heating pad for her and plugged it in. Earl was always solicitous of her when he had something on his mind, as though he were afraid that if he let go of her, he might lose touch altogether. Many years of farming had taught Earl how to daydream. He had been known to plow a field twice while caught up in some fantasy. It wasn't absent-mindedness, though, that had prevented him from giving Mike the appropriate talk about the facts of life. Ivaline had told Mike nothing. It was a father's position, she argued. She was sure Mike hadn't known what he was getting into, but Earl always insisted that young people today know more than enough from television and school.

When Ivaline stared at Earl accusingly while he was undressing, Earl said, "Don't tell me he doesn't know where babies come from now. He could have done something this time."

"I don't believe he wanted another one."

"Young people don't know what they want."

"He doesn't love Linda Lee. You can just tell it. He looks so miserable."

"Maybe he thought if they had another one, it would bring them together." Earl rolled into bed. "Who knows what happened? Maybe she tricked him."

Ivaline radiated so much heat from the heating pad that Earl retreated to his edge of the bed. She was happy for the extra space. The heating pad felt like a comforting warm-morning stove. She wished they had a king-sized bed, like Mike and Linda Lee.

She said, "Young folks nowadays think they have to have everything right at the start. Washer and dryer. Color TV."

"Two cars."

"Living room suit. Dinette."

They both knew they were listing Mike's installment payments, and it made them feel better to be spiteful for a while. Ivaline felt the pain in her shoulder subsiding. The heating pad was blazing.

Earl said, "Tomorrow, if it ain't windy, I have to put straw on the bank of the lake. And get those logs out of the water."

"I believe if it wasn't for Jennifer, he'd leave Linda Lee," said Ivaline into the pillow.

"Now let's don't start meddling," said Earl.

Today is windless, but instead of working on the lake Earl is at another cattle sale. Spring reminds him of calves. When Ivaline empties the last wheelbarrow of manure, she looks across the field at the swath of bright water. The spring runoff washed a curve behind the dam, and Earl had to pack it with scrap lumber and tree limbs to keep the levee from washing away. Now the water is still. It seems blown clear by yesterday's wind. Beyond the pastures, a smokestack from the industrial park is making a curlicue of smoke in the sky.

After laying down straw and wood shavings in the henhouse, Ivaline goes to the shed and gets her rake and small gardening tools. The flowerbeds are matted with wet leaves. Every year she wants to expand the flowerbeds, but there is never enough time. She has never had enough tulips to satisfy her, never enough to pick a bouquet. She squats to clean out the leaves among the iris, wondering if they should be dug up and divided this year. The ground is warming up now, and the nubby tubers of the iris are showing through the soil like the knuckles of old farmers. As she uncovers the iris and the tender red peony heads, she realizes that she has been talking to herself.

The dog is suddenly going crazy, barking at something down in the field. Standing up, Ivaline sees two small boys fishing from the bank of the lake. The sight makes her laugh. There are no fish in the lake. She quiets the dog and squats down to work again. Ivaline's children, who didn't approve of the lake, all remarked that a lake would invite trespassers. Her children are full of big ideas—build a shopping center; sell lots; build houses. They call it "developing the land." Her daughter Mary Sue, a hostess at the Holiday Inn, laughs at her for keep-

ing chickens. "It don't pay you," she said. "You can buy eggs cheaper."

"Now that we don't have cows, we need the manure for the garden," Ivaline told her. That was an excuse, just like Mike's excuse about not waiting too long for a second child.

Ivaline doesn't know why she cares about chickens. Sometimes she will watch the way they scratch eagerly at a cracked egg, gobbling it up, shell and all, so greedily and possessively. It is something they recognize, something that belongs to them.

Ivaline stands up, dizzy for a moment as the blood rushes away from her head. The boys are still there fishing. Holding her hand tool, as though it could somehow protect her, she walks down the lane toward the lake. The dog goes with her, and she talks to him gently, to prevent him from rushing up to the children. The lane is damp and the dog makes footprints, big roses, in the mud. The spring runoff has hollowed the tractor tracks into deep ruts.

The boys see her coming. They stand up and stare at her, then turn away. They are about nine or ten, both wearing green John Deere caps too large for them.

Ivaline calls to them, "Hey, what y'all think you're doing?"

"Just fishing."

"What you fishing for?"

"Whales," the taller one says, giggling. The other one adds, "Crocodiles," and points to the log half-submerged on the other side of the lake.

The boys look like brothers, each with a pebbly sprinkling of freckles and the same sandy eyelashes, like bird feathers.

Ivaline says, "Well, I was watching y'all fish and I was wondering how long you'd keep it up. There's not a fish in that lake. We just dug it last fall. We haven't stocked it yet. Y'all better get out of there."

The boys climb down the bank. Their shoes are muddy. The taller one has a rod-and-reel hoisted over his shoulder, and the other boy has a bamboo pole with a string on it, which he carries uncertainly. The taller one turns back then and goes to the top of the bank and picks up a rock. He hurls it into the lake. It sounds like a fish plopping. The boys walk away while Ivaline stares at the circles spreading in the lake. She wonders if they could spread invisibly beyond the lake and out into space, the way sound is supposed to. The boys are trudging away, their heads down in disappointment, and Ivaline turns up the lane. When she looks back at them, they are climbing through the barbed-wire fence. The smaller boy seems to have caught his fishing pole in the barbed wire.

It occurs to Ivaline that she talked to the little boys in an unkind tone that she has hardly ever used with children who were strangers.

When she gets back to the yard, Earl is there, back from the stockyard. He has brought some cabbage slips for the garden—a bargain at fifty cents a dozen. Ivaline takes the tray of plants from his hand and stands there holding them, while she points out the little boys retreating in the far field—little sailboats out on the sea. The cabbage slips are scrawny and some of the lower leaves have bugholes in them.

"I couldn't bring myself to say 'no trespassers,'" Ivaline says. "But I acted mean. I wish I hadn't acted mean."

"We'll have to put up a sign," Earl says. He laughs. "There ain't a fish in that lake."

"I told them that. I wondered how long they'd stay."

"Does your shoulder still hurt?"

"No. I think I got the kinks worked out."

Earl is walking toward the barn, and Ivaline is walking along with him. "What are you fixing to do?" she asks.

"Get out the tractor. I thought I'd break up a little garden spot for Mike and Linda Lee out behind the barn."

"I thought you didn't want to meddle."

"Well, the ground's rich back there," says Earl.

"You know they don't want to come back here."

"What else can they do?"

"Linda Lee won't want to dirty her hands." Ivaline follows Earl into the barn. "I thought the ground was too wet to work," she says.

"It's drained off back there."

Earl climbs into the tractor seat and starts the motor. The disc, which Earl had used to break up the garden before the rains came, is still attached to the tractor, an old gray Massey-Ferguson. It seems hardly bigger than the toy tractors some people are mowing their yards with now. The disc backs out slowly. It looks like a row of shiny hubcaps.

Ivaline shouts at Earl, "Don't you want me to rake off that place first?"

Earl shakes his head no. "It don't need it. I already looked it over."

He turns the tractor and drives behind the barn. The tractor makes a sound like plates rattling in a cabinet. A little waft of wind blows a manure smell around the barn.

Breaking new ground. Ivaline remembers a time when she was a small child, about the age of one of the little boys by the lake. Her father and her uncle were breaking new ground for a tobacco patch. They made her clear it out first, and she worked all morning, picking up sticks and rocks and loading them into a wheelbarrow. She had a cat with her. She always had a cat with her then. Her cats wore her doll clothes, but that day it was too hot for anything but a bonnet. When Ivaline's uncle brought her a cool dipper of water from the cistern at mid-morning he pointed to some heavy rocks she had missed. Ivaline flared up, crying at him, "You're working us too hard—me and Sweetpea." Sweetpea was the cat's name, Ivaline remembers now. "Look at that cat a-panting," she said to her uncle in a cross voice. She tried to give the cat some water from the dipper, but the cat slipped away from her and she spilled the water into the honeysuckle vines around the new stump where she sat. Her uncle turned away, looking down at the earth and shaking his head, saying, "This world and one more—in the ironworks." Ivaline used to think the ironworks meant hell, but later she understood that her uncle was just talking about life. It was a tone of resignation, but it was something else too—mockery. He was laughing at her for thinking anything could ever be any better or any different. □

A BOX OF CRAYONS

Carol Adorjan



He received his first box of crayons on his third birthday. They were colors his mother said and, although he knew the names of colors ("Bwue, green, red, yehwoe"), he did not know which was which. It didn't matter. It was his favorite present. He liked the smooth-shiny feel of the crayons and the dullness of the paper wrap. He ran his thumb back from the tip, delighting in the contrast. He rolled the crayon, his thumb working it up and down his fingers, to feel its solid roundness. And the scent! How he loved the scent! Whenever he returned one crayon to the box and took out another, he held the box close to his face to savor the fragrance. It was like no odor he had ever known; yet it was reminiscent of his mother, whose skin emitted a more subtle form of the same waxy aura.

On that first day, the day of his third birthday, he filled page after page with lines and shapes of different colors and proudly showed his drawings to his mother.

"That's beautiful!" she said and showed them to his

father, saying, "Look what he did today. Aren't these lovely!"

His father nodded and patted him on the head and said, "I wish you'd draw some for me," which he did. Gladly.

That night his mother allowed him to take the box of crayons to bed with him. "Just tonight because it's your birthday," she said to his pleading.

Every day he made more pictures. Sometimes his mother would ask, "What is this?" and he'd tell her, "A cow," or "A tree," "Our House," or "A Monster!" not knowing until he'd said it what his drawing represented. Other times he would know before he began what it was he was about to draw, and he grew impatient with his mother if she didn't know. On those days, there'd be an edge in his voice when he told her. Even though she would say, "Of course. I should have known. My eyes are tired today," he'd put the drawings away then and do

other things, always keeping the box of crayons near at hand, where he could smell them if he felt the need, or hold one in his hand.

Sometimes his mother would sit down to draw with him. He watched her to be sure she was careful not to break a tip. Still, the nibs began to wear down. He peeled back the paper of each, slowly because he liked the gentle ripping sound, to reveal more of the crayon. Then, if he held it in a certain way, a narrow shaft of light shot the length and disappeared under the remaining paper. Holding the crayon upright from the bottom, he turned it round and round, but the band of light never seemed to move. If he rotated it in half-circles, however, the light moved too, back and forth over the crayon.

Every night he took the crayons to bed with him, sneaking them under the covers when his mother was busy laying out his clothes for morning. One night when he couldn't sleep, he took out the crayons one by one and drew pictures on the wall beside his bed. With only his night light, all the crayons lost their color. He made random choices hoping the combinations would be pleasing. Because of the space, so much larger than the paper he was given, his hand was unsteady. His heart pounded in anticipation of the morning light which would infuse his creation with life. And he fell asleep awaiting it.

The saw edge of his mother's voice cut through the shell of his sleep. Her mouth was a vast gaping hole of anger. He felt himself falling and imagined himself being consumed by her anger. The picture. She was angry about the picture. It must be ugly, he thought, to offend her so.

"Look at this," she shouted. "Look at what you've done!"

But he couldn't look. How could he look? He squeezed his eyes so tightly shut that he sent small white lines racing under his eyelids.

It did not quiet her. "Look!" she said again and again. "Look at what you've done."

He turned his head slowly and opened his eyes. The wall was alive with an intricate pattern of color. It was surely the most exquisite drawing he had ever made.

Later, when she had scrubbed the wall of every trace of color and had returned to her other, softer self, he took out paper and tried to reproduce what he had drawn in the night. When he was satisfied that he had come as close on this small space as he could to the original, he showed the drawing to his mother.

"Beautiful," she said. "You are really an artist."

It was not the picture then that had brought out that sharp-edge mother, but the place. After that, although some nights the temptation loomed like a giant shadow, he never again drew pictures on his wall. And he stopped sleeping with his crayons.

His mother bought him coloring books and told him to color the pictures, which he did on occasion to please her, not himself. Never himself. And when she began instructing, "Stay in the lines," he quit the coloring books and used the crayons only on blank sheets of paper.

By winter, the crayons were worn to stumps. And whenever he was through working or left for a minute to attend to other business, he had to be careful to gather the

slivers and chips and return them to the box or his mother would throw them in the garbage. Whenever anyone asked him what he wanted for Christmas, he said, "A box of crayons." "Is that all?" they would ask. "Yes," he answered. "A box of crayons."

On Christmas morning he awoke before dawn and sneaked downstairs, his heart racing. His parents found him an hour later crying beside the Christmas tree. They tried to amuse him with the shiny red fire engine and the rifle that made a terrifyingly real sound and the helicopter with the revolving propeller. But they could not console him. "The crayons," he said. "Where are the crayons?" They laughed then and said, "Your stocking. Did you look in your stocking?"

On his fourth birthday, he received a box of crayons. He thought himself fortunate to have been born when the Christmas crayons were nearly used up. There were eight in this new box just as there had been in his first box. He could count them now and almost unfailingly called a color by the right name. Green. Yellow. Brown. Red. Blue. Black. Orange. Purple.

Red was his favorite. He used it for everything: trees, sky, grass, people, monsters. Sometimes his pictures were nothing but red, every inch of paper pulsating with its radiance. At such times, his mother had difficulty seeing anything but the color. "Modern art," she would say. "No picture; just color." Other times, he surrounded a narrow shaft of red with yellow or some other color so the red would leap out at him, singing its brilliant song.

He got so he could close his eyes and tell with his fingertips which of the colors on a page was red. He told his mother, who scoffed saying, "Impossible!" Still, she tested him and he was never wrong. Once, to trick him, she set before him one of his all red drawings. He could detect, in addition to the red color, the various shapes it had assumed. It was a trick, his mother said. He could not convince her he could see with his fingertips what she could not see with her eyes.

Christmas and his birthday became synonymous with crayons. All through the year, the scent evoked memories of those occasions so that, for him, every day became a holiday.

On his sixth birthday when the box contained eight crayons as had all the others, he broke each in two before he drew a single line. His mother was distressed. "It's because I have more now," he told her, but she nevertheless interpreted his act as destructive.

On the first day of school he received a new box of crayons. "Sixteen Different Brilliant Colors," his mother read. And it was only September!

Whenever he could, he drew pictures in school. His teacher praised his efforts, but she would not let him stay in to draw during recess and when he took his crayons outside and sat alone on the steps to draw, she took the crayons away from him. He sat alone then, doing nothing until recess was over.

By Christmas when he found the new box of sixteen crayons nestled in his stocking, none of September's was broken and only the red and its variations showed signs of hard use. By his birthday, he could read the colors: *red, red-violet, carnation pink, orange, red-orange, yellow-orange,*

yellow, yellow-green, green, blue, blue-green, violet (purple), blue-violet, brown, black, white. He read everything on the box. Even the size (*Each 3⁵/₈ In. x 5⁵/₁₆ In.*) fascinated him.

His mother put all the crayons and pieces of crayons in one big blue metal box that said *CRAYON BOX* and threw out the boxes the crayons came in. She could not understand why he was upset.

In third grade his teacher said, "Trees are not red." He knew that at the core everything was red. But he made the trees green to please her. She said, "Trees are not green." "On the north side they are," he answered politely. She grew angry, and he felt sorry to think she had never walked clear around a tree nor looked through things to the center as he had done.

One day she read a story about a Giant. And he drew a picture as he listened despite her wrathful glances. Afterwards, he gave it to her. "What is this?" she asked him. "A Giant," he said. "I know that," she said, "but here—what is this?" And she pointed at the moon and the stars he had drawn over one shoulder of the Giant and the brilliant red-gold sun over the other. "The Giant is so big," he said, "he is in the night and the day at the same time."

She called in his parents and told them he was having difficulty with spatial concepts, having confused time and space. The school psychologist, for whose services the government paid, administered to him a battery of tests for learning disabilities. And while they were at it, they had him tested for color blindness. All the tests were negative.

After that, his mother no longer praised his work saying only, "Uh-huh," when he showed her his latest drawing. Soon, he stopped showing them to her.

Every birthday and Christmas and First Day of School he received bigger and bigger boxes of crayons. The blue metal crayon box was filled to overflowing. His mother cleaned it, discarding the bits and pieces. And the more he had, the more difficult it became to find a true clear red. One year he received, instead of the usual box of crayons, fluorescent colors which screamed at him from the page and burned his fingertips. One by one, so as not to alarm his mother, he threw them out. Another time, the box contained rectangles consisting of confetti chips of various colors pressed together. And he could never be sure when he used one what color would appear on the page.

His teachers instructed him in the art of seeing what they saw and corrected his lapses with harsh words. He would never be an artist, they told him, if he couldn't see things as they were.

His pictures became very precise and correct; the sky was blue and the trees, shades of brown and black. And he never made a line without first thinking about it for a long and painful time.

He came to dread his birthday and Christmas and the First Day of School.

Before his tenth birthday, he told his mother he wanted no more boxes of crayons. He had become interested in mathematics, he said, and wanted, instead, a calculator. He attacked mathematics with the same fervor

C.G. HANZLICEK

ON A HIGHWAY SOUTH OF MINNEAPOLIS

Three chestnut horses,
Wearing white
Saddles, stand on the beach
Of a wide sea of snow.
The elm trunks are black

On the lee sides,
White where they are driven by wind.
Each gust is a fight at the wheel
To hold the car
From taking wing like an osprey.

Red barns toss on the drifted waves.
Kitchen lights blinking,
White houses edge the vanishing point
Like liners in fog.
The word silo has a charged meaning.

The new ones cradle
What can cross oceans to kill.
I want to pull over,
Wade the wind across a field,
Open the door of an old-style silo,

And breathe
The heavy urinous smell of silage
Until I faint.
Or laugh out loud
In the joy of a pure memory.

he had devoted to his drawings, and it comforted him to know he could depend on the answers to the problems and on the responses of his teachers and his parents.

He grew up an accountant with a steady firm that had a pension plan. He bought his own children colored pencils or chalk and would not allow crayons in the house because he could not tolerate the odor. Once, when he was helping his son with arithmetic, he said, "The diameter of a crayon is five-sixteenths of an inch." Otherwise he never mentioned them.

Sometimes he would dream about crayons. In his dreams, he would cover the accounting ledgers with pictures. He would draw murals on the walls of the train station and bands of raging color down the centers of the city streets. And in the morning when he awoke, he could not remember having dreamed about crayons at all. □

Stephen Dixon

MEETING ALINE



I dreamt of her. That's nothing unusual. Dreamt of her plenty of times before. About every four months or so since I last saw her three years ago. Since I walked out on her after she asked me to. "Walk out. I want you to," she said. "Walk. Really. It's no good. For too long it hasn't been good. It'll never be good." Other things she said. I walked, got another apartment that day, a cheap enough place, hotel I still live in, residential hotel, so I didn't have to bring or buy any furniture. Called her the next day and said I'd like to pick up all my things and she said she'll send them to me with a friend, where am I? I told her. She sent them. Some things I wanted weren't in the cartons and valises. I never called back and asked her for them.

That phone call was our last communication. I've thought of her many times since. Haven't pined for her though. I don't mourn for her and never did. I was glad it was over too. I loved her when I left her but knew we were never going to work out too. But tonight I dreamt of her. It was a good dream. She was very nice to me in it. She was nude

too. Right from the beginning of the dream. Had a darker suntan than she ever got when I knew her. The white marks of a brief bathing suit's top and bottom showed. It must've been summer. The windows were wide open. It was very bright in the room. We were high up, overlooked a river, in a bedroom I didn't and still don't recognize. She smiled, we talked, I forget about what. Something about how you doing, how are you doing, I'm doing fine, I'm doing fine too, "Why don't you take your clothes off?" she then said and when I said "Well, I really don't know," wondering if the pleasure I'd probably get would be worth the problems I might have to go through later because of it, she took them off for me, or started to. I let her. I wanted to make love very much. Her body was smoother and stronger than when I knew her, though when I knew her her body was very good. Her body in the dream was exceptional. Smaller waist, larger breasts, firmer buttocks, longer slimmer legs. She used to say—said it several times, usually when we were naked on top of the bed covers—"If I'd been stretched on a rack when I was

fourteen, which was when I stopped developing. I'd have a perfect body, one, not that I'd want to be there, good enough for a centerfold." I never had any complaints. In the dream we made love twice. I was very satisfied in the dream. She seemed to be too. I woke up with an erection, played with myself, lost it. How many times have I had an orgasm in a dream—forget two, which was how many I had in this one. Maybe once. A few years ago. I vaguely remember it. I forget who it was with but I don't think it was her.

I do some exercises, dress, make breakfast and leave for work.

On my lunch hour I see her. It was sunny and warm when I left the office building and I took off my sweater and jacket and carried them. I took a sandwich and coffee I bought at a sandwich shop to one of the midtown pocketparks. All the tables and chairs were filled. I sat on one of the long concrete benches that run the entire length of the park. I'd finished half my egg salad sandwich and was wiping my mouth with the napkin when I saw her. She's with a woman. They're looking for available chairs it seems. I want to shout her name but then think wait awhile. If they start to leave, go after her and invite them to sit with you along the wall. That is, if they don't find two chairs or don't after they don't find two chairs decide to sit against the wall themselves. There's plenty of space against the wall. If they decide to sit against the wall, wave to her as they approach, if it's this wall, and if it's the other wall, go over to them without your sandwich and coffee, if you haven't finished by then, and ask if she'd mind you joining them. If she does mind, say sorry and leave. If she doesn't mind, go back to where you were sitting, get your sweater and jacket and sit with them. If they find chairs, go over to them. If she sees you before they find chairs or head for one of the walls or start to leave, wave to her as if you just saw her and get up and start over to her. I wrap the second half of the sandwich in the paper it came in, just in case they want something to eat, though there is a small food shop in the turret at the park's entrance, or if they don't have food in their handbags.

Look at her. This morning I'm making love to her in a dream, five hours later I see her in this little park off Fifth. How do you really feel about her? She looks good. That's not answering the question. She points to a table a couple are getting up from and she and the woman start for it. She hasn't seen me yet. I don't know the woman she's with. Aline's blouse is the one I remember from her closet when we lived together and which she never wore during those four years. I once asked her why she never wore it. "My husband gave it to me," she said. "I don't know why I kept it. I got rid of everything else he gave me except some of the books he didn't inscribe. Besides, it's not me." They sit and both open their handbags and pull out brown paper bags. Containers come out of the paper bags first. The woman points to the waterfall at the far end of the park and they start talking about it it seems as they pull off the container tops. I look at the fall. It makes a nice sound, drowning out the surrounding traffic and construction noises. They take out wrapped sandwiches and half- or quarter-pound containers and plastic forks

from the paper bags. Cole slaw, potato or noodle salad, something like that inside these containers. They unwrap the sandwiches and pull off the container tops. They eat, drink and talk. Her companion faces me. Aline has her back to me and I can only see a little of her profile now and then. She seems the same. Suppose she saw you, came over to you and said "Hey, let's cab to my apartment and make love for a half-hour—a quickie like we used to do when we were in a rush," what would you do? She wouldn't do that. It's absurd to think about. Though just thinking about it—well, that says something. Though we often weren't compatible, our sex till the last month was usually very good. I don't see a woman now, haven't been serious with one since Aline, though I've gone with several women since. One for six months, another for three. I went to Europe with one for a month, spent two weeks with another on a Virginia beach. Suppose she said "Call me," what would you do? I'd say I don't know. I don't think I want to be with her again. But she wouldn't say that. Or maybe she would, just so we could later talk. "Let's have dinner one night," she could say, "or lunch, just to catch up on what we've been doing the last three years." I've no idea what she's been doing. I don't see anyone we both knew from that time. I did for a year. Then the man we both knew moved to Utah and the woman we both knew died. I went to the funeral, Aline didn't. In that first year after we split up, Aline had a lover both those people said. She might still have him. She might be married to him or to someone else and have a child. I'd like to know. I should go over to her. I wanted to marry her and have a child but she kept putting it off. Strange that I dreamt of her this morning and see her now. Stranger that I made love to her in the dream. Stranger still that we made love so much and I was so satisfied in the dream. If I speak to her should I tell her I dreamt of her this morning? Would she even believe me? She used to say I exaggerate too much, that it was one of my problems. Tell her, why not? It's interesting. Somewhat, not very. It's coincidental. It'd also be interesting to see her reaction. I wouldn't volunteer that we made love in the dream. If she asked what were we doing and where were we in the dream—she liked to ask that after I said I dreamt of us—I think I'd be cagey. That I'd rather not go into it, or would I say I forgot? No, I'd tell her. What's to lose? I'd say something like "Strangely enough, we were making love. That's the absolute truth. I'm not saying it for effect or making it up. I've nothing to gain or lose by saying it. I know you used to say I exaggerated a lot, but I don't anymore. I've other problems, but not that. So that's why I mentioned the dream. Because it was only hours ago and the first one about you in months and here we are now." If she asked me to go further into it, I'd say we had orgasms—at least I did: two. "Never in my life have I had two in a dream—not even in any number of dreams in a month." If she wanted to know what she said in the dream and what her sex was like, I'd mention her wanting me to take my clothes off and that her last words in the dream after our lovemaking was over were "That was very good for me, I'm sure it was for you." That's what she said. I remember it now. But I wouldn't go that far in describing the dream. If I said we made love in the dream,

she wouldn't ask me anything further about it and I wouldn't volunteer. I think I know enough about her to know what she wouldn't ask. Though it's been three years, I've changed somewhat, so I don't see why I should be that sure about her.

The waterfall stops for a few seconds, starts. Aline and the woman have finished their food and are drinking from the containers. I stand up to go over to her, sit. I'm nervous. My stomach aches a little. It's been a long time. I think I'm afraid of a brushoff. No, I'm sure she'll be polite and probably interested to speak to me. I feel my hair. It's standing up in places and I comb it back flat as I can get it. I'm almost sure she'll be glad to see me. After three years she'll have forgotten or just won't care what went wrong between us. I have. We'll be like two old friends meeting by surprise after a long time, so with none of our defenses prepared, or something like that. It's happened before with others. Only a few people I know keep that wall up for all occasions, but she's not like that or wasn't. Not. That doesn't change. I look at my nails. Clean enough though the cuticles could use clipping. She used to say I didn't take care of my nails, but I started to soon after we started seeing one another. Continued to also, but I probably haven't paid attention to them the last few days. Try nibbling the worst of the ragged cuticles off and they'd start bleeding. If I don't go over I'll regret it. I'll do something stupid later on, like calling her tonight, if she's still at her old address or in the phonebook. I'll say something on the phone like "I saw you today, I'm sure you didn't me, but I didn't have the courage to go over to you. I was nervous, what can I say?" If she then said she also saw me but didn't have the courage to speak to me or whatever, I don't know what I'd say. It'd be a departure point for more conversation though. No. I wouldn't call, though I'd certainly think about doing it. I have to go over. I get up. I carry my sweater and jacket and the paper bag, look for a trash can to throw it in, don't see one, and approach the table. Her friend sees me approaching, pulls herself closer to the table to make room for me to pass. "No no," I say, "I just wanted to say hello to Aline."

Aline starts to turn to me. "Oh no," she says, covering her eyes with her hands and turning back to her friend, "I don't believe it—I won't. Ty. Oh god, Ty."

"Yes," I say. "How are you?"

"I still don't believe it." Her eyes are still covered. "Oh god, I knew this would happen one day. What did I tell myself to do if it did? I forget. Well, it's a nice place for it to happen, but I don't want it to happen. Deborah, this is going to seem nuts to you, even embarrassing, but this is Ty whom you know about and I don't want to see him, so put up with me for a few minutes? Ty," her hands still over her eyes, "I don't want to see you. I have my reasons. Believe me I do. I told myself the day I last saw you, whenever that was—"

"Three years ago. Three and a half, even."

"Whenever, that if I bumped into you—now I remember. Told myself several times and never changed what I said I'd do, that I would do my damndest not to speak to you and to do everything I could to get away quick as I could from you. You know why. No, you probably forgot. No—with your mind?—you know why, though watch,

watch, you're now probably going to ask why I'm acting this way."

"That's right. I'm standing here wondering—"

"You probably think after so long a time that we could just meet and talk and joke and shake hands and ask after each other—well you know, right? Don't answer," when I'm about to say yes. Deborah's not believing this. She says "If you want me to leave, Aline?"

"You crazy? Don't you dare. Don't you dare. You stay. We're both leaving here together." Hands still over her eyes, back towards me. People at other tables are looking at us. Almost everyone at the surrounding tables. My stomach hurts worse than before. I don't understand why she's doing this. "Think I'm crazy," Aline says to me, hands, back, the same way. "Think anything, but what you did will take six more years to make me bump in to you normally and say hello and how is the family and your mother who I hope is still living and healthy—"

"She is."

"And your sister and nephew and what you've been doing and so on and so on. Six more years. But not now. And don't tell me you don't know what I'm talking about."

"I—"

"If you don't it's because you don't want to. Because, if you're not lying, you've pushed the whole thing out of your head because you're so goddamned ashamed of it. But this," she says, "this," turning to me and tapping her nose, "just remember this. Deborah, please help me out of here. If my feet make it I'll be very surprised." She stands. Deborah stands, holding their drink containers. "Leave them. I'll buy us two new ones somewhere. Or a drink. A real drink. I'll need one. I don't care if I come back to work high."

"What do you mean 'This, this, remember this'?" I say.

"Deb, please, lead me out." She holds out her hand.

"What about our garbage?" Deborah says.

"Leave everything. Sometimes you just have to go. Please." She shakes her hand in the air. Deborah takes it and starts leading her out.

"You've really embarrassed me," I say. "You're embarrassing me and you're embarrassing yourself and your friend. Why couldn't you have just said hello and goodbye and be done with it?" Deborah leads her around several tables and chairs, lets go of her hand when they're in the clear, and they leave the park. I don't understand why she acted like that. And that "This, this, remember this." People around me are looking at me or doing their best not to. I don't know what to do. To leave the park or sit someplace else in it away from this spot. Right next to the waterfall to think. I leave the park, go the opposite way they went, the longer way for me but I don't want to bump into her again today. I go back to work trying to figure out why she acted that way. She asked me to leave then and I did. I phoned the next day or a few days later I now remember and asked if I could pick up my things. She said they were already packed and she'd send a friend over with them. Okay. That friend came. A man. Man and woman, actually—they said someone else was waiting in their car downstairs. Their child, that's right, and Aline

had said the man was an old school friend from out of town. I asked them, I think—yes, I did, if Aline was very depressed, because she sounded so over the phone, and they said yes or one of them did, but both looked at me as if I was the worst person they ever met. So what did I do then to make them look at me that way and Aline to act as she did today? I hit her the day I left. That's right. I didn't want to leave, she wanted me to, we got into an argument, and I hit her in the face. Probably in the nose. Then she screamed, at me or because of the pain, and I turned around, opened the door, slammed it shut and called maybe a week later it was, maybe two, and asked for my things. Her friends came. I never apologized to her. Never asked if I'd hurt her. All right. I forgot the whole thing.

At night I think of calling her. To say I forgot, that I'm sorry for what happened three years ago, that I didn't want to bring it up again now but I had to, that she was right about me today, that I now understand why she got so upset. But she'll probably hang up before I can say a few words. I look for her name in the phone book. I've looked it up before—last year. And the year before that. Her name was at the same address those two times. I looked it up then and maybe more times than that just to see if she was still living there. Her name's still at that address. The heck with it, I'll call. If she screams on the phone, hangs up, then that will be the end of my ever calling her. Maybe then I could write her an apology for hitting her three years ago and an explanation for today. I dial her. She answers with a hello. I hang up. I didn't have the nerve. She'll know it's me unless someone else has been doing that to her lately. Then she'll only think that perhaps it's me, or maybe not. I get out the book I've been reading, make myself a brandy and soda. I have four brandy and sodas while I read and then feel tired and go to bed. Tomorrow's work.

I wake up around three to go to the bathroom. I go back to sleep and dream about her. She's clothed. I'm sitting on our old bed in her apartment now without any clothes. She sits beside me, says "Open your mouth, I want to kiss you." She kisses me as I've never been kissed in a dream. It's the longest kiss I've ever had in a dream or out of one. I almost faint in the dream during that kiss. The dream ends when she takes her lips off mine and says "That was a good kiss, wasn't it? I know it was for you. You lovely man. We know how to kiss." I don't go back to sleep. I try but can't. I think about the dream and that it was a very exciting one but what does it mean? As far as I know, I don't long for her. I no longer love her. Obviously the kiss dream is tied in with seeing her and dreaming about her yesterday, or is it? Because what about my lovemaking dream with her yesterday? What's that tied to? It doesn't matter. Dreams are dreams. They mean one thing, they mean another, they mean many things. I'm not much for interpreting my dreams. I like them when they're good. I wouldn't mind dreaming of her every night if I could always have such exciting dreams. Now, if I saw her today on the street or somewhere, that would be different. Then I'd think that maybe my dreams mean something important. That suddenly they've begun to predict when I'm going to bump into someone, or at least

MARGARET ATWOOD

A STONE

On the wooden table the flame
of the lamp burns upwards without sound
and the smaller souls are called out by it
from where they have hidden during the day
in rotting stumps and the loosening
bark of trees
and hit softly against the window,
their feathery bellies licking the glass.

A loon ripples the night air
with its tune of clear silver,
the light blues
and the one who has always been there
comes out of the shadows.

Have you had enough happiness? she says.
Have you seen
enough pain? Enough
cruelty? Have you had enough
of what there is? This
is as far as it goes.
Now are you ready for me?

Dark mother, whom I have carried with me
for years, a stone in my pocket,
I know the force of gravity
and that each thing is pulled downwards

against its will.
I will never deny you
or believe in you
only. Go back into your stone
for now. Wait for me.

her. I can't get back to sleep. I turn on the light and read till about the time I usually get out of bed on a workday.

I wash, shave, do my morning things, go to work. I spend my lunch hour sitting by the fountain in front of the Plaza Hotel. I sort of look for her while I'm there and on the street, but don't see her. I go back to work, finish for the day, go home. I think of calling up a friend if she wants to have dinner here tonight, but I just don't feel I'll be good company. I make a salad, finish the book I've been reading and start another. I have several brandy and sodas. I get very tired and go to bed. I wouldn't mind having another exciting dream with her tonight. I go to sleep and wake up around eight without being aware of having had any dreams at all. □

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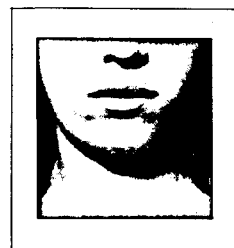
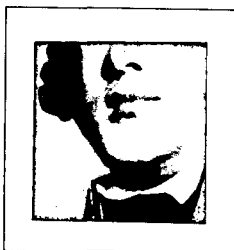


Willis Barnstone

TWENTY GOSPELS & A NIGHTINGALE

GOSPEL OF DEATH

Death governed once before and almost took
forever till its tyranny was up
and I was born. Yet the scene's hard to look
at with remorse. It's almost fake, this cup
of *nada*. But an ancient tea was boiled
with spices making me, and now I see
the other *nada* and my wait is spoiled
by brooding on that last eternity
of absence. Hell is now. And so why care
about a time I'll never feel? Or night
that starts when I am not? I drink a bell
of faith. The soul is anchored in the light
of the dumb angel flaring in the hell
forever now. My faith keeps drinking air.

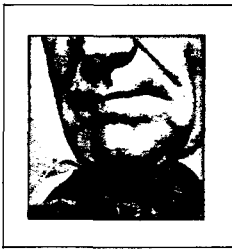


GOSPEL OF CLOUDS

On cloudy Sundays clouds are in my heart
as if my brother came, as if the rain
lingered among the mushrooms and the art
of freedom washed into the murder train
or rinsed the peat-bog soldiers of the camp.
On cloudy Sundays clouds are with Joe Hill
(last night I dreamt he was alive); the tramp
was mining clouds for thunder. And uphill
into the clouds I feel that time descends,
as if my mother came, as if the moon
were flowering between the thighs of friends
and gave us fire. On Sundays when the swan
of death circles my heart, the cloudy noon
rolls me gaping like dice (though I am gone).

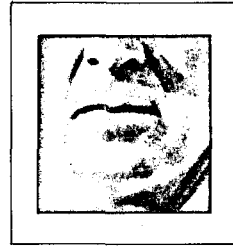
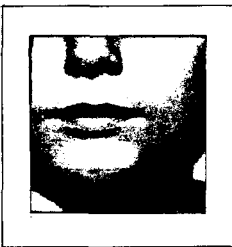
GOSPEL OF THE MEADOW

Out in the wind I asked a pine
how I could love and it consoled
me quietly. I drank some wine
and the young meadow wisely told
me I was mad. The morning East
was red with war, and coughing planes
squabbled like pigeons at a feast
of flaming children, and the rains
flooded Eden and Ur. Out in
the gale I asked an oak how I
could die, and thunder in the hills
blew up the moon. I drank some gin
and stupidly began to cry
for peace, and prayed to daffodils.



GOSPEL OF THE LONELY

Even Walt Whitman—hugging continents
and lovers, singing of himself—was lonely.
His hungers for the earth were arguments
of isolation. Fame and book were only
the grass of need. I eat my meals alone
and dream the world inside a glove of nerves.
Am lonely in the bed, the room. The phone
is mere connection. Solitude preserves
immaculate distinction. And I ask:
how can a friend, unconscious from a stroke,
keep talking to the room behind a mask
until the gases of the body choke
the fire? Walt saw the coldness between star
and star and sang compassion: we are far.



GOSPEL OF SALVATION

Oriental like the morning sun,
a rose is growing in the wall
as flagrant as a murdered nun
in Salvador. The biblical
Savior is out of print and cant
restore her eyes of rotting blue,
nor dissipate a nuclear chant
of bombs nor mend the ozone. True
to dust (before the sky falls in,
pinning us underground), a rose,
a beast, a nun follow one day
of life before they decompose.
Oriental like the Buddha's way
we shiver once, and we have been.

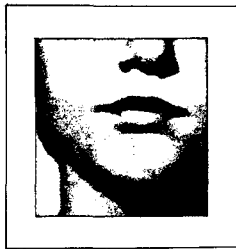


GOSPEL OF THE SAD

The sad are lucky for they feel, and know
they have a being, because it aches. The loss
of love is common malady. I go
shabbily to a loft, and ring. Friends toss
a key in a white sock out of the sky.
Climbing the warehouse stairs, I smell the cat-
piss in the trash and feel the rain or sigh
of rags and vagrants in Penn Station at
the phone booths. I am desolate not sick
(for age has not yet rammed its plumber's snake
into a heart of deathbed wisdom), yet
the rays of lofty sun and women stick
my heart. Climbing endlessly high, upset
by peace, I drown unsweetly in its lake.

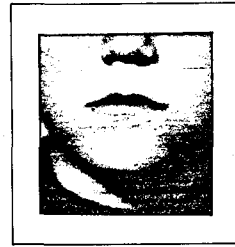
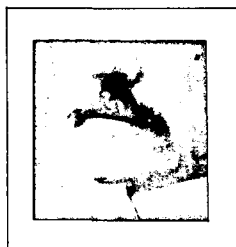
GOSPEL OF RAPTURE

The yellow cottage in the woods is sun
among the cherry trees, a clapboard glass
on which the father sun becomes a fawn
startled in August. Hands of uncut grass
finger the windows' black abandonment.
Mr. Ketcham the drunk, dead on the floor,
was dropped wet in the earth of white Vermont
and in the dark ferments. But is there more?
A soul? Or hope of secret space? Was he
translated to the chamber of the stars,
the crystal cottage where the fire and dew
of heaven feed the farmer? Two old cars
are rotting in the weeds. Mr. Ketcham's tree
of life is dreamless, still, and earthly blue.



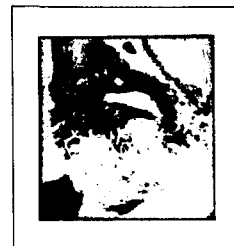
THE OTHER GOSPEL

Because the old good news has lost its spell
and the Good Angel of the Book has flown
like Icarus into the sun of hell
and reigns as Satan handsome with brimstone,
cannon and dread, the world is empty for
the rest of us. And with faith dead I seek
another Gospel with the news of more
than bodies weakly born and withering weak-
ly from the wakened mind. That Book is not
of words (who's happy with the shade of words?)
but inlight of black hills, the light to be
calm fire one evening when the Angel's caught
with brigands in a liquor store, Real birds
sing wordless books. We soar invisibly.



GOSPEL OF TRUTH

How can I give my life for something so
abstract and wordy? No. I'm not so dumb
as that. And yet the darkness I cant know
is endless fog and mud and bulls who come
vomiting ivory nights. The Book of Night-
mare has a letter for each name of God
and yet the truth of darkness is of light,
not dreadful holy words, not the black sod
of hell with which a twilight Jew, nailed on
a tree, cursed us, and not the father of
the terror: oriental despot, dread
manic with fists. Only the vagrant love
of ignorance is brave. Yahweh is dead,
the world's mistake. Truth is the blackest dawn.

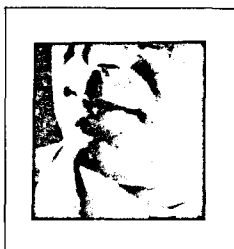


GOSPEL OF THE LOSERS

Night of explosions—bombed cafes and shops
all over Buenos Aires. Up north—the war.
In boots of black asparagus some cops
leap out of unmarked Falcons. From a bar
I watch them round up students (who will soon
have disappeared); then walk to the Academy
of Failure where my friends are giving shots
against success. Paco's composed a tune.
against the epidemic malady
of fame. Graciela's got a booth of pots
and pans for her own Center of Despair.
Despair and failure. As of now I'm firm-
ly with my comrade washouts, yet I squirm,
a shadow in the city of Good Air.

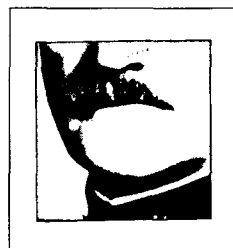
GOSPEL OF THE ROOM

Returning to my room—it has my lamp,
some shirts, a photo of my daughter, and
a second pair of shoes— I am a tramp
among the worthy (I think proudly). Banned
like Mandelstam, grave as Celan, I feed
my night with firebirds and postcards found
with poems in a dead man's trenchcoat. Greed
for fame is infamous. Do I confound
the word with me? The me—well, trivial
and often taken for the word—has its
own grievance with salvation's clock. But in
my room (even the stars circle in jail)
the poems were born in faith. My lucky fits
of heaven! Now a shirt to hide my skin.



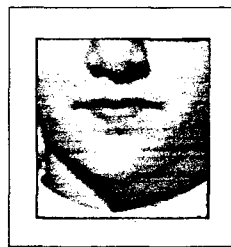
GOSPEL OF THE SINGER

They call me solitude they call me by
the name of my disgrace the child and so
I'm drunk on corners of the sky and shy
although the moon painted the street with snow
so don't abandon me in the white night
I leave the city looking for my child
who is like me crazy and kiss the light
of sister planets the police are mild
with me a harmless nut O serene friend
under the jasmine air you are like me
guilty of heat of feeling trees of salt
or opals in the mouth what agony
of freedom they won't shoot us it's my fault
for singing child I love you we offend.



GOSPEL OF IMAGINARY BEINGS

The ghosts are you I live with on a ship
of snow. I'm dreaming on my cabin bed,
over the hold of worms, and taste the lip
of madness. Love, Antonio Machado said,
is in the absence, so your arms of light
tickle my watch. You are invisible
as are the gulls around the moon, or night
horizons blond like Easter bread. You still
the singing whales. You smell of fire. Sick of
accusing faces down in the iron mess
of this black ship, weary of the jaguar
or shark or iron bureaucrat of love,
I love your ghostly words, your clouds, your star
of snow, your laughter at my loneliness.

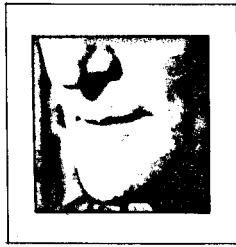


GOSPEL OF LOVE

We took our cycle to the lovers' cliff
at Ronda where the knights murdered a bull
or fought the Moors. Sore from the road and stiff,
we sat where Rilke (in the fanciful
old Quaker lady's inn) sat by the fire,
hearing the fire of Góngora the Jew.
It seems a century ago: desire
for sun, refinement, and for white and blue
Sevilla, oranges, and the Spring Fair,
five nights of dancing into dawn. Sunday
morning in fascist Spain, the women rode
their flowery stallions. Salt was in the air
as we cycled on the coast. That episode
of wonder was our childhood sun. Our way.

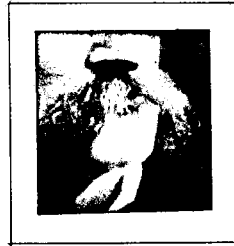
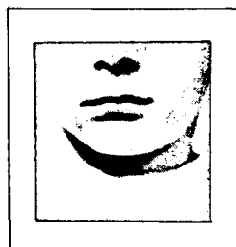
GOSPEL OF THE WAY OF CHAOS

To breathe or think is real, somehow. I take them gravely and I guess I am. Yet when I lose a job or wife or world—or wake cheerful and naked like a citizen of Eden—or as a black tailor feel a hurricane of love is merely air never to blast me from the rotting wheel of time—all meaning dies. Here in my chair in hot Madrid I don't know where to go. Does chaos have a way? I'm writing this for you—ghost reader on a cloudy star inside, the vagrant spy of souls. Below this act of words (messiah of grief or bliss) are words. And chaos stings like vinegar.



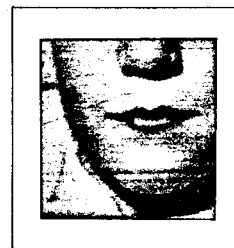
GOSPEL OF THE GARDENER

As Mary turned to leave the tomb, she heard "Woman, why are you weeping?" It must be the gardener, she thought. "Because my lord is gone," she said. "They've taken him away. I came with spices for his body." When she looked again two angels robed in white were in the empty tomb. Then on that night of loss and vision in Jerusalem, of death made miracle, the Magdalene went through the alleys to her mat, lay down, and in an evening blue as paradise she knew the gardener was God. So John told us. What hope without her stratagem of faith? She dreamt beyond the funeral spice.



GOSPEL OF THE DREAM

You come back and no daisy in the sun is bright as you. You take a cigarette and try to smoke. Modern. Mother, your son is laughing at your airs and can't forget how mild your vices are. * I'm on the phone with Father (ninety if he were alive), a bachelor with a pearl stickpin, downtown near the East River. * Mother has got five days left before the knife imposes sleep of far ships. * Father from the old hotel floats out like a dove. Dad, I'd disappear for good if we could meet, and let them keep our earthly names. * Before both of you fell, I'd come. Our night of peace. I wake to fear.

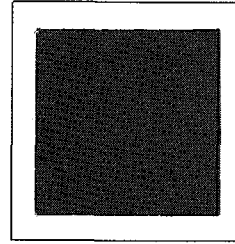
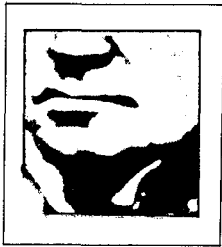


GOSPEL OF EARTHLY FEELING

Near his disciples on the mountain he arose and disappeared. Simply a tale and yet I feel it. Once a mammoth tree of thunder moaned beside me on a hill of burdock. Vermont night. I heard the blood of plants sing out. The arms of time were slow as bliss. The patch of parsnips was a throb of poison, and I slowed and felt the snow of darkest meditation. When the body was taken from the cave, Joseph's own room rose to a cloud holding his lord. I feel their cloudy peace, but fire holds me here. Shoddy with tales felt more than truth, I hope to heal these fiery blisters as the mountains bloom.

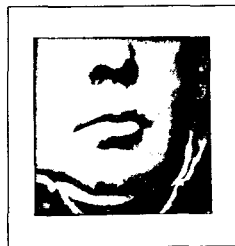
GOSPEL OF LIGHT

The moon is natural in the evening. I cannot be angry at it. And a flute high on the mountain is the sweetest lie of separation. And the stench of fruit fogging the blasted lots, over the quake in the Algerian city, joins the dead who don't smell sweet. Yet in the inner lake of light (the lake of the heart, Dante said), the rays are stronger than the suffering and rapture of the outer world. To be inside and be the light is everything I want. For now I lived seized by the wall, those ten walls of the flesh, and what I see is glaring dark, that is, nothing at all.



GOSPEL OF THE NIGHT

Plotinos sang the way to lose the way outside. His Alexandria blurs. The streets become illusion. As he fades a ray of darkness fills the wilderness and heats the night with ecstasy. The One above the night, the Sun who never can be seen (the seer is the Seen), is All and love and joy connecting atoms. Yet between the flight of the alone to the Alone, the climb, the circling up to Light, I've been a creature of the streets, and I suspect you share my vagrant sadness. If we groan the clouds are safely in the clouds. Abjectly dark, I thank the night for raining in.



THE NIGHTINGALE

Although the horror of the nightingale (the holy nightingale who sings unheard, invisible and strident in the gale beyond the tree of stars) is not a word or region of epistemology, I wake to it like breakfast when my eye of pus is washed to meet the ecstasy of day. Horror is never far: the dry biology of insect hope, the moth trapping the moon, the wasp of solitude amid the panting of the air, the cloth of flying worms. And yet I always hear the secret of the nightingale, deluding me. Invisibly I'm almost here.

Graeme Gibson

PERPETUAL MOTION



Robert Fraser couldn't hear them at first, but he saw them, hundreds of blue-grey birds streaming in over the forest. Some dropped from sight among the beech trees as he went for his gun, while others landed along the fence-line searching for food. He could hear them now, fluttering about and calling impatiently. The woods were full of them as he called urgently for Mary, for the children, loading his guns with number six shot. It was Alice who appeared first, almost before he'd called her name.

Coiled with excitement, the birds gathering like a storm, she had already topped up the powder and shot flasks and was tying empty grain bags into bundles by the time Mary and Calum came hurrying from the barn. Gunshots sounded from the direction of Casey's, and others boomed sporadically along the road to town. Impatient to be at it, he organized his family into teams. While Mary and the two young girls prepared for the cleaning

and salting, Alice would join him and Angus in the shoot, and Calum would hitch Ned to the small wagon. After gathering the kill, and it would be a good one, make no mistake, they'd bring it back in the two-wheeled cart. The womenfolk would skin the birds and remove the breasts. He had to raise his voice above the children's and repeat himself as they clamored. "There's another flock, look! They're like bees." And Mary, shading her eyes with her hand, watched the flights uneasily as they rose to the southeast; while Angus, sighting along his weather-beaten gun, fired random imaginary shots in the air. "Like bees . . . Oh, look!" They all joined in, chanting as Alice began to sing:

When I can sight my shotgun clear,
To pigeons in the sky,
I'll bid farewell to salted pork,
And feed on pigeon pie.

From the forthcoming book *Perpetual Motion* by Graeme Gibson, to be published by St. Martin's Press in fall 1983; printed by permission of the Charlotte Sheedy Agency Inc.

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Heading north, another flock glinted majestically in sunlight above them as they left the yard. It swooped down suddenly all together over the beaver meadow, the sheen of their plumage fading to grey as they landed in shadow. Exploding in panic as a chicken hawk plummeted among them, they were again caught by the morning sun. They re-grouped like fish and in a flash of brilliant color vanished into the trees.

As if for the very joy of flight, other flocks flew hither and thither above them, as Robert positioned his two children along the zig-zag fence running beside the woods. The multitude of hurtling bodies filled the air. It was like a sudden violent wind that speaks of storm, or thunderheads ballooning on a yellow sky. Alice's face, as she crouched by the fence, was pale and out of focus. She raised her arm and pointed. Turning, he saw thousands of birds flying at the height of a man across his field; they were coming straight at him. The leaders were within thirty feet before they made a quick turn, some to the left, others to the right, a swift most graceful turn, and then they were streaming past him on either side. He was never to forget that riot of color, the wonderful whirr of their wings as they passed within a few yards of him. He could have beaten them out of the air with the butt of his gun but he didn't. Swivelling, so the shot wouldn't glance off the thickly feathered breasts, he fired both barrels into their retreating bodies. Reloading feverishly, he heard Angus and Alice shooting along the line. He fired again. The pigeons came on in such numbers behind him that thousands were passing between the discharge of his gun and its reloading. He fired volley after volley as the flock diminished, then turning caught another one crossing at an angle. They flew so close to the ground they had to rise before clearing the fence, and as they cleared it, so he fired into wave upon wave until he'd exhausted his powder and shot.

Engrossed in his battle, he didn't realize that Alice then Angus, running out of ammunition, had left him alone. Crouched behind the fence, Alice had watched her father and brother. She could see the pigeons, some fifteen to twenty at a shot, hurtling to the ground as the guns roared. Seeing that Angus had finished, she went to join him, but he waved her away. Motioning for her to take his gun back to the house, he left the shelter of the fence and entered the forest.

After laying his empty gun on the ground, Robert hid behind the fence. He selected a slender cedar rail and commenced to batter down many more as they came over. Finally exhausted, overwhelmed by those millions filling the air with wings, contemplating dead and injured birds littered between him and the forest, he stretched his legs along the ground and filled his pipe. Whole branches were shattering under their weight and somewhere to his left he heard an attenuated crash that must have been an entire tree. Even his fences were threatened. How would he seed? And the hunters, hard professional Yankees, perhaps the same he'd met by Ardvassar, perhaps Slood, would appear on the road, his eyes like melting snow.

Pigeons darted or tumbled before his eyes in such numbers he was at first unable to focus on individuals; it was as if the giant flight was itself indivisible, a single dark

and sinuous body roiled from beyond the horizon, eclipsing the sun; so a gloom, pervasive and mournful, settled on him. His hands, convulsive on his thighs, had become foolish, as if he'd seized hold of water or smoke, as if he'd reached into darkness.

Just beyond his feet, a large male stared from one empty red eye. The beast had been pierced by striking a twig while in rapid flight; and since it was an old bird, and the stick much worn, it had survived its wound, carrying that skewer for God knows how many seasons, only to be killed here at the end by Robert's club.

Crawling among them, wringing the necks of those not dead, gathering his kill into a manageable pile, he was astonished and filled with admiration at the old injuries and hurts, the broken legs, deformed bills and healed breast wounds, for these scars attested to the tenacious nature of its species. More numerous than all the trees of the forest, and more beautiful, singing their sweet and plaintive calls, they were survivors, they were life itself. Marvelling at a God who'd provide for the wants of His creatures in such an extravagant fashion, he saw something he'd never forget, a slender rock elm, completely covered with birds; it was bending inexorably to the east. Surely it would snap as more and more birds descended from that immense flock that now seemed a permanent darkness, a hurtling river across the sky. Here and there, having gorged themselves on the soft mast of last year's beech and oak, resplendent males were crashing to the earth, hurtling into one another with stabbing beaks. Or puffing themselves up for their hens, expanding their fiery breasts until their heads, glaring into the sky, were forced against their backs as they strutted absurdly, cooing, trembling. Everywhere they fought or wooed, until, as the ritual progressed, some began snapping their wings faster and faster. An incredible noise rose up in the forest as millions of pinions cracked against one another, against the branches on which the males were perched.

Fraser couldn't believe it at first. Like locusts, a plague of rats, they'd devour everything, he'd be ruined. . . . Leaping to his feet, with pigeons veering away from him, crouching from the rushing wings, he began to run. And by the time he reached his family sheltering by the barn, he didn't appear to recognize them. They stared, waiting for him to speak, to tell them what to do; but he stalked past them with such anger, they could only follow apprehensively as he returned to the house. He paused on the porch. "There is a wrath gone out from the Lord," he said to no one in particular. "The plague is begun."

He ladled a jug of hot water from the stove, collected his shaving gear and set the small mirror up by the window where he could see; and leaving Mary standing inside the door, he proceeded to strop his razor. He worked ostentatiously, slapping and drawing the blade back and forth, raising it to the light to peer at it before setting it on the windowsill. After working up a furious lather, he splashed water onto his face and began to apply the soap.

When it became apparent he wasn't going to say anything, Mary began to lay the table for dinner. The familiar utensils, the plates and cutlery, had become strange in her

hands, somehow distant, like objects rediscovered after many years. And the insistent rushing of wings filled her with wonder as when a child near her father's house she dropped pebbles into a fissure in the ancient rock and heard them rattling and bouncing down towards the earth's center and she knew they continued to fall long after the sound was gone.

Staring at half his face in the mirror, Robert Fraser shaved carefully, stretching the skin with one hand and scraping with the razor. Glancing out the window, he saw millions of birds. The air was black with them. They shadowed the sun like clouds, and the roar of their wings resembled thunder. It would go on all afternoon and evening; it would continue tomorrow. There'd be no seeding this year, no crops. His fences were collapsing under their weight. They were enveloping his land like flies on rotting meat.

The hunters began to arrive during the first days in May. At first there was a carnival air, a wild expectancy as crews staked out prime acreage for themselves. Shouting and laughing, greeting friends and avoiding old quarrels, marvelling at such good fortune, they hooted one to another. "Look! Would you look at the size of it?" They established camps and set to repairing spring and purse nets. Methodically they oiled their guns, checked out the lay of the land, and only killed birds to eat them. On those nights the forest resounded with singing, with drunken laughter around fires that roared in every clearing, along every road, as if a jubilant army had descended upon the land.

Fraser's days passed in the building of drying racks, in the organization and supervision of local squaws to filet and salt the carcasses brought to him each night by the thousands. After supper he moved from camp to camp, offering a drink from his own bottle, chatting with tired but exultant men, negotiating, always scheming. He began to understand the subtle logic of the hunt and how it fit the natural habits of the pigeons, the behavior of its species. He discovered how by a long-standing convention no hunter would venture into the roost until a full week after the squabs were hatched because before then, if sufficiently disturbed, the adults might desert their nests *en masse*. The whole kit-and-kaboodle might fly off never to return and a fortune would be lost.

There were older hunters, those who'd been in the game a lifetime, hard little men with sad eyes who told him how it was before things got organized, how millions upon millions were lost from greed when folk charged right in, killing as fast as they could before the flight rose up in disarray and vanished.

"Well, you see, sir," Silas Wilder explained, "once the nestling's a week old the parents are stuck, you see. You can grab 'em smooth as silk right off the flaming nest. They don't even blink."

Dark as thunderclouds, each morning a roar of wings filled the sky as the males returned to the eggs, to the females who sprang hungrily into the air, so that spiralling funnels rose and fell on every hand. It remained magnificent and terrifying; a marvel they never collided; a mystery that in those roiling millions, each found its own nest,

its own mate, that the female seemed to recognize the sound of his wingbeat. Before the male arrived, she sprang wildly into the air and was gone even as he touched down.

And so they alternated, brooding and eating, eating and brooding, while hunters slaughtered them on the feeding grounds. And Robert Fraser, hot with success, his unexpected laughter preceding him from the house and signalling his return, Robert tallied the barrels already salted down, the whiskey and baked goods sold, salt by the hundredweight, cages by the score—he missed nothing and lusted for more.

Convinced the birds would return like this each year, that there was some key that would make him a fortune, Robert searched out men like Silas Wilder. He demanded to know how many eggs, how many in the hatch, how long the incubation and what the birds ate, how long they lived and where they went in summer, in winter, the best baits and traps. He watched men stringing seine nets over rivers where low-flying birds would strike them and become hopelessly entangled or tumble into the water to be collected downstream by the men in boats or on rafts. He helped set up a purse net thirty paces wide at the opening and four times the height of a man, which narrowed to the size of a sock, so that great flocks, entering at full flight, were tumbled together, a terrified mass of birds the men could set upon and dispatch with ease.

"I tell you, sir, I had to work and work hard." With a face like old leather, his head completely bald but the rest of his body covered with hair, Silas Wilder imprisoned a male bird under his belly and between his thighs. "If I had my memory, I could tell you of lots like me, ordinary men who knew what work meant." Crippled by running an ox team in winter, as he'd tell anyone, in water like as not, pulling timber for the Baron (a bastard right enough, he wouldn't drag a soldier off his mother), Silas must have been eighty-five if he was a day. "Like what's-his-name," blinking vacantly, "a mate of mine, gunner for the government in '37, he had his leg shot off." Taking the bird's head between thumb and curled forefinger, he clamped his good leg against the lame one. "Easy, you bastard, easy!" He held the bird steady, sewing one eyelid shut and then the other. "He called to see the mangled limb. What *was* his name? Gave three cheers for the Queen and died."

Silas wiped the blood from the bird's face with the heel of his hand, then strapped both red legs to a willow stick. Raising it aloft, he dropped his arm once, twice; and each time the bird, a fine-looking creature over a foot and a half long, beat its wings in alarm. "There," said the old man, "that'll fool them." Laying bird and stick on the ground, he belched happily. "Aubrey! His name was Aubrey Wilson! Once we carried a spoiled bitch of a lady from Whitby to York, it was called then, in a crate, by Jesus!" He laughed a scrawny laugh. "There she lay, stuffed in with blankets and pillows, eau-de-vie, laudanum and the Christ knows what, groaning like death was in her throat, and us laboring beneath like niggers, while all the while these gentlemen. . ." He gestured as if there were offenders, toffs among his gang casting salt over the debris used to conceal their butterfly net. "These gentlemen, they

just brought out their money, and knew it was there—until both it and the land was gone.”

With bulging eyes, his mouth pursed like a small red button, he stared at Robert. Behind him several men propped dead pigeons to look as if they were dozing in the sun. “Tell me, sir . . .” Retrieving his stick, so the pigeon exploded in a blind flurry of wings, of grunting chirps, he struggled to his feet. Robert expected him to fall at every instant, so brittle were his knees, so intractable his spine. “Tell me,” he wheedled, shaking one leg and then the other, grinning at Fraser with an odd expression, while at his side the stool pigeon fluttered disconsolately and then with its head full of blood like a rooster held upside down for the axe, it fell still. “Do you believe. . .”

There was a chorus of whispers. “Silas, for Chrissakes!” The men darted for cover because a dark cloud was rising in the north. “They’re coming. . .” The old man scuttled to the anchor stick, secured the stool with its captive bird and then a cord to its other end.

Robert Fraser settled himself so he could view the edge of the bog, the open space ringed by spectral paper birch and poplar, moon trees reflecting light where others absorbed it—and above them now a good-sized flight of several thousand males. They swooped towards the clearing and over the eight men crouched unmoving, breathless, until Silas Wilder placed a reed contraption to his lips and blew a raspy drawn-out note, the enticing call of a feeding pigeon. Jerking the cord, he caused the willow to drop suddenly beneath the decoy male, so that leaping to maintain balance, with blindly flapping wings, he seemed to be calling to his fellows in the air. With suspicions now allayed, they descended to feed upon the salt.

When most of the birds had settled, a wee Frenchman at the end sprang the trap. There was a fierce collective cry of alarm, but too late. Huge wings enclosed them like a mouth, and while a few stragglers escaped, the men sprang quickly to their feet with loaded shotguns. “Huzzah, you bastards. . .” Of the two thousand males enticed into the clearing, not more than a hundred and fifty escaped. “G’wan and tell your mates about Silas Wilder and his crew,” cried the hunters. “G’wan, g’wan!” Still waving their arms, stamping and bellowing, they approached the net which resembled a pudding about to burst. Grabbing the shrieking heads poking through the mesh, they silenced each skull between thumb and forefinger or severed it with tinsmiths’ pincers.

Thus in every clearing and along each stream, by rivers on the cleared land of farms and in tangled moose pasture, in beaver meadows and forest tracks—wherever pigeons settled to feed and drink, hunters came from as far away as Dayton, from Utica, Rochester, even Cincinnati and New York, from Des Moines or Columbus. And Canadians too, men out of Toronto, Oshawa, Port Credit and Barrie—they set upon them with spring traps, purse and seine nets, guns and dead falls. They filled thousands of barrels with salted breasts, and almost as many were shipped in ice (most of it supplied by Robert Fraser); and since they’d run out of crates, his woven cages sold like hot cakes. What’s more, this was only the beginning, a kickoff. Sorting through silent carcasses, wringing the necks of those they’d missed, stuffing them into grain

sacks piled in the bush, they speculated on the Big Money and knock-me-down work to come, the hard-horse grind next day when they’d enter the roost.

Silas Wilder’s men swore there’d be no time for jollity after tomorrow, no sir, not until the flock’s dead or gone. Dead *and* gone! “You want to know how to be certain of a fox?” Smearing a crusted hand across his forehead, Silas arched his back. He grinned with teeth so long you could see the roots, and spat on the muck between his feet. “There’s some get a fox anytime they want, but the most of us never get a clear shot, that’s the truth. Isn’t that true?” His fine nervous fingers were smeared with blood; they twisted, writhing mischievously. “You want to know their secret? A fellah told me once, you don’t just thunder out after the fox, taking the first shot you can get, no sir, that doesn’t work at all. When you see him, you’ve got to call out real quick, in a good clear voice. You say ‘Good morning, sir!’ politely, and then you blast him. I don’t know why but it works every time.”

Sitting against a tree, his torso and head pressed to rough bark, while some scattered fresh debris, concealing the reset trap, the others freshened the salt from a barrel hidden in their blind. Robert watched the old man rearrange his lifeless decoys, plumping the scruffiest, supporting the head of one with a stick. Then standing back, rising on tiptoe as if to view them as a descending flock might, he kept a weather eye out for the next bunch. While behind him, at some point tearing the stitches from his bloodied eyes, the stool pigeon trembled violently, its powder-blue throat vibrating with an abject clicking sound. From somewhere far away came a low rumbling as of thunder, although the sky remained clear and untrammelled as fresh snow. The forest leaped with variegated greens and yellows, with spangled shadows, the urgency of wood warbler song and their dashing flight. The pigeon too seemed to be waiting, listening for a rush of wings that would signal the new arrivals; but the distant moan had ceased. Young leaves and branches danced lightly, swaying about the clearing, and Robert felt the breeze upon his cheek, in his hair; it ruffled breast feathers on the dead birds, crackled in last year’s marsh grass and was gone.

With darkness came a damp cold that did little to mask the terrible stench of guano, of curdled crop milk. The forest floor was smeared everywhere with shit, with fragile heads and their trailing mess of crops, and the men crunched greasily, stumbling, sliding, so the lights danced, swooping in such a way it appeared the bush teemed with will-o’-the-wisps.

And all the while, as on each of the past sixteen nights, a mournful peeping chorus grew in strength, in desperation, as the evening progressed. The sound had become so familiar that most accepted it as part of the work—as the roar of furnaces, the scuttling engines, whistles and gongs, that harmony of mills and factories is eventually submerged in the mind. So this dying lament from orphaned squabs—there must have been a hundred thousand by now—this pitiable noise had become familiar as the sounds of their own bodies. What else can a man do? Scarcely big enough for market, they’re useless and besides, gorged to bursting, the plump bodies come apart

in your hands; and so, for as long as there's adult birds, the hunters will ignore them.

Caught among ragged branches, the moon cast little light on the forest. Soon the men would collapse into bedrolls, into a dreamless sleep; and come the dawn, when they awoke, the chorus will have subsided.

With daylight the slaughter resumed with an urgent sense that time was running out, they must get what they could right now, for the good Christ knows when they'd see another flock like this.

Harangued from sleep then marshalled by section bosses, the men strung out into lines and blanketed designated areas so as not to miss a bird. Seizing each female right off the nest, separating the carcass from its head and crop with a wrenching twist, they quickly filled sacks fastened to their waist. Tying them with an identifying tag, they left them for collection that night and started right away on a second or third, then soon a fourth.

During the first week or so it had been easier, for there were nests within reach, the ground was relatively clean and dry and the men were fresh. But as time passed, they had to go higher and higher, until now with ten-foot poles, heavily knobbed at one end, or with rocks tied to long ropes, they bashed adults from the nest while the more agile scrambled among branches sometimes forty feet above the ground. Wringing necks or breaking wings, dropping the catch to their fellows beneath, these were the monkey-men, quick and wiry; they'd sometimes leap from tree to tree.

Long before noon, maybe after a quick smoke amidst the carnage, with lumpy sacks everywhere filled with dead birds, maybe after a sandwich and endless complaints about the back-breaking work, the sickening smell, the crews were ready to go back over the same ground, and they'd get as many again because the males had returned. Feeding their young without pause, they too would accept the hunter's hand.

"It's like picking apples."

"They're stupid bloody creatures, make no mistake."

"Like shucking corn."

"But it's a good thing for us, so it is."

"Goddamn right."

By noon one day the adult birds will have gone, leaving the forest silent, desolate. The guns remain still. Mucking half-heartedly, occasional figures might collect fresher corpses. Most will rest in preparation for the end, the finale so dreaded by old hands, because you never get to straighten up from dawn until supper, it's shitty work right enough, and in a pest house too. How much better it was at the beginning when all a man had to do was set the traps and wait.

Lounging nostalgically, with whiskey supplied by Robert Fraser, contemplating their money and how to spend it in Des Moines, in Buffalo or Toronto, Chicago or Cleveland, each in his imagination has returned to a wife or sweetheart. If they stir themselves to poke up the fire, to rummage for bread and cheese, when they wander from one group to another for companionship, perhaps a game of chance, their bodies appear servile, abstracted and lonely. After six or seven weeks on the grind, with bad

food and no women, sleeping like as not where they lay, after the cruelty of their toil, the strain and boredom of it, their thoughts have drifted elsewhere like rounders or gypsies, like the minds of men too long at war.

Emboldened by the silent, empty woods, all manner of predators will converge to feed upon the carnage: slender, long-legged weasels, the graceful marten; there'll be raccoon and bear, elusive panthers, the bobcat and lynx, wolves, foxes, hawks and eagles, the crows, buzzards and owls. They'll all descend with what appears like rage. And while most will feed on the ground, others will set upon squabs in their nests, for they know, as men do, it's here they'll find the choicest meat.

At some point soon, succumbing to euphoria, the fledglings will launch into the air, hurl themselves free with startled cries—at first just the strongest and most venturesome, but their example will infect the others until everywhere a generation of pigeons will be scrambling frantically, fluttering from branch to branch to the ground, or falling like small pillows. While from taverns in distant towns, from the company of women with soft arms and bellies, hunters will return to their own bodies, to the hunt's attenuated lust and wonder.

They'll discover new faces among those crowding into the forest, whole families with children and soldiers from the garrison. There'll be preachers, men off the lakes, gangs of women from Toronto, merchants, even toffs. And because there's a festive mood abroad, a comic urgency will return with the newcomers. Ashamed of their languor, for it suggests itself as faint-heartedness, and being too long on the job without a break, the hunters will stare boldly at the women, openly appraising this one's full breasts, the accentuated shape of another's hips and flank. Gesturing among themselves and sniggering, they'll charge into the forest to show them all how it's done, how money is made.

With crops that are grossly swollen, stuffed in a last parental act, each squab emits a wailing cry: constant and raucous, a communal lament punctuated by screams when predators, driven back by approaching men, they now attack from the opposite flank. Congregating as their nature dictates, beating with impotent wings, the fledglings scuttle. Surging like overwound toys, they collide and tumble, converging in torrents, until the forest floor boils. And wheeling and darting above, buzzards and falcons, raptors of every kind, plunge among them with screeing cries.

Knowing they've a day and a half before the young begin to fly, maybe two if they're lucky, urged on by squad bosses, the hunters soon forget both newcomers and their own homes. Lost in the present, with the earth seething before them, they become dizzy automatons. Seizing each bird by the back so as to imprison the wings, mechanically turning it breast up, catching the head and bursting crop, they tear it in one piece from the body, and grab another, then another. They might as well be machines. When the bag at their waist is full, there's another, the exploding mess from each crop is identical and all birds look the same; draped in regulation sacks, stumbling in leggings and boots, even the men will come to resemble one man. □

I. February

Rain. Rain falls over the flat expanses of the Valley, over the small trees and the monotonous low houses, effaces the rolling hills across the Bay we cannot see. February rain, it comes down for hours, late in arriving but persistent as disease. We are in the Fourth Floor ICU, the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, crowded around the bed of a splotchy baby.

"I don't understand it," says Izzy, our Resident, who wears a Spiderman pin in the lapel of his white coat. He is gloomy and pale, with limp brown hair falling over his eyes and a thick moustache that hides most of his mouth. "He's not taching with the Levophed anymore." He turns to the nurse. "Is his MAP standardized yet?"

It reads twenty; a quarter of survival.

"It's standardized," the nurse says.

"Zero it again," Izzy says.

"What difference is a millimeter or two going to make?"

He shrugs. "Mike," he asks the Intern, "did you call the parents yet?"

"I talked to the mother. She's coming."

"What about the father?"

"He's a basket case, he's not going to come in. She'll want to see the baby alone for awhile."

A blood gas comes back: pH 7.00, pCO₂ 77, pO₂ 31, Bicarb 11. I read it off and everyone becomes silent.

"Thirty-one?"

I nod. "How about some more Bicarb?"

Izzy glares at me. He rolls his moustache in his lower teeth. It's my second day on the service, and up to now he hasn't really noticed me.

"Sure, do it. What the hell. Nothing else is doing any good."

When they give the Bicarb nothing happens. Robby, the baby, is a two year old who had a bad cough that turned into pneumonia that turned into generalized sepsis, poisoning his entire body. He lies on his back, spread-limbed, with tubes and lines entering his body. His skin is marbled with blue. On the viewboxes, X-rays show his whited-out lungs. It's a wonder that the respirator is able to pump even 31 millequivalents of oxygen into his blood.

Children of the Valley

Beside Robby is another baby, Alyssa Montero, who drowned when her mother left her in the bath to answer the phone; when she returned Alyssa was floating face-down, dead. But she brought Alyssa to the hospital anyway, someone pumped the water out of her lungs, and fifteen minutes later she was alive, defying scientific fact. Now she lies in a crib with white metal bars, gurgling at the mobile above her. She has shaggy dark hair and large, intelligent black eyes, and she laughs now as I tickle her, moving arms and legs easily; as we've put in the chart, there are "no focal neurological signs." I wiggle the mobile, and she follows the little plastic ducks and rabbits with her hands. A commotion causes me to turn.

Robby has arrested. On the monitor his heart rate is 28 and irregular, his MAP is 14, and the nurse is attempting CPR by pushing on his chest while Izzy injects drugs through the central line.

"Do we have epi in an intracardiac syringe?" he says. "Where's the mother? Is the mother here yet?" His eyes fix on me, standing useless, awed. "Find the mother."

In the waiting room are two Mexican women, both young, fat or pregnant or both. I ask if they've seen the mother; they tell me in Spanish that they do not know English. I ask the nurses at the front desk; they haven't seen her. I call the operator and have her paged STAT. Then I stand by the door of the ICU, ready to intercept her and direct her—just as I stood at the door of a chapel in Cleveland not long ago for my grandmother's funeral, collecting signatures in a condolence book as mourners left. I wait five minutes by my digital watch, as the two women gossip in Spanish. Then I go inside.

Izzy is by the nurses' station.

"I couldn't . . .," I say.

He shrugs and turns back to the phone.

The Code is over. The nurses are back at the other cribs, the students are in a side room, and a white screen has been pulled around Robby's bed. I walk around it. All the tubes have been detached, and the baby has been wrapped up in a white blanket, so only the face and one mottled hand stick out. The only other dead baby I ever saw was in anatomy class, a pretty blonde girl with no visible reason for not being alive.

The two Mexican ladies come in. They bump against me, and crowd their fat bellies against Alyssa's crib, and without a glance at the white screen begin cooing and calling to Alyssa. In this light, a weird product of fluorescent tubing and gray rain, I see they are not identical after all, but that one is slovenly and middle-aged and the other is young—perhaps nineteen—and pretty and pregnant. I wonder which of them is the mother.

We are at a public hospital in the Valley, a hospital for the poor. There are hills on three sides of us, a Bay somewhere to the north, and the ground is flat, like the bottom of a lake risen above water after many millennia, land that is solid but somehow still aquatic. The freeways are elevated here—perhaps the water is expected to rise again. The air, when it does not rain, smells of onions or maybe it is garlic: Izzy says there is a factory south of us, somewhere in the hills. I feel like I am swimming through the muggy air, kicking and splashing, flip-turning at the walls. I am not all here. Perhaps it is the children who keep me from being here, perhaps something more internal and obscure. Why for instance do I not make myself more useful? Why do I play with Alyssa while Robby codes? But I have questions too. Where was Robby's mother when his cough turned bad? Where was Alyssa's mother when she was drowning? And the fathers? It is easy to start wanting to blame.

Thursday, after Rounds, we come into the Playroom for a teaching session. Students and house officers, we sit in chairs designed for toddlers.

Knees crowd up against our faces, our white coats fan out on the floor. Out in the hall we can hear the faint, muffled sounds of crying babies and beeping monitors and the ringing of telephones and the voices of harried nurses. I think of the little boy who died yesterday.

"Dr. O'Halloran's going to talk Fluids," says Mike, who sits in a tiny plastic chair. "Prepare to be confused."

Izzy comes inside; his white coat and hair are drenched. He sits down on a wooden rockinghorse, and rests his chin on its head.

"What's with you?" Mike says.

"I was out at my car," Izzy says.

"Again?" says Mike. "Jesus Christ!"

Izzy rocks back and forth on the horse, disconsolate.

"He died with bad lytes," Mike says. "Sodium 120, potassium 7.5. We really screwed up giving him the extra K."

"And the quarter normal saline," Izzy says.

"Don't blame yourselves," says Emily, our Senior Resident. She is an elegant, remote blonde woman, a Bostonian who seems entirely out of place in the Valley.

"Oh, I don't," says Izzy. "The kid was dead when he hit the ER. Still . . ." He rocks back and forth. "That reminds me of a joke. A great Yiddish joke. You want to hear it?" No one says anything, so he goes on: "You see, an old tailor is walking down the street and finds a bag containing a hundred thousand dollars. He can't believe it! He takes the money home and wraps it in a blanket and stuffs it behind his refrigerator . . ."

It is a long joke, about a gun and a rabbi and a thief, and it is ten minutes before he reaches the punch-line. Nobody laughs but me. To me the joke seems wonderful, justifying or at least excusing the morning.

"That's horrible," Emily says.

Izzy rocks on the horse; now he is in a foul mood.

"Shit!" he says. "Why didn't they send him somewhere else? Why'd he have to die on my hands?"

No one says anything.

"Where the hell's O'Halloran?" Izzy says.

After lunch we go down to Pathology. Lunch was linguica, long gristly Portuguese sausages, and my stomach rumbles as I follow Izzy and Mike downstairs to the basement—Pathol-

ogy departments always seem to be underground—past the clanging pipes of the furnace room, through a door marked No Admittance.

It is an immense relief to find only a few organs on the steel table: lungs, liver, a heart. A pale woman in a plastic smock—a Pathology Resident—shows us the fatal hemorrhage in the lungs. It is anticlimactic. It turns out Mike and the pale woman went to medical school together in LA, and they trade stories about who dropped out to have babies, who's becoming a hotshot academician, which couples have been made and unmade.

Izzy and I leave Mike there talking.

"What do you think?" Izzy says when we're at the furnace room again.

"I've seen it before," I say.

"That reminds me," Izzy says. "When I was in med school. We had these patients come in—Arabs—a whole damn family all with the same name." I wonder what on earth reminded him of this, or for that matter what reminded him of the rabbi story, but think better of asking.

"They were all named Ibrahim and Muhammed, with four names. Ibrahim Muhammed Muhammed Ibrahim—Ibrahim was their last name—and Muhammed Ibrahim Muhammed Ibrahim, and Muhammed Muhammed Muhammed Ibrahim. It was incredible. Calling the lab was a nightmare. Bed Control went crazy. Muhammed Muhammed Muhammed . . . hey, that reminds me. . . ."



I am unable to approach with love, to see a constant reality and act within it, I am more extraneous here than on any other service, and more uncomfortable with the patients, even though the hours are short and the work is not so hard. The children are small, they have no history, they can be examined in two minutes. They are delicate, though, and it takes

much practice to thread plastic tubes into their thin-walled little veins. But I don't have to do much of that. Worst is that they are victims, so many of them, abused, malformed, mistreated; and so I am unable to quiet my fears and approach calmly and with love. It is unsettling to hear them cry. They are always screaming and crying, but hoarsely, automatically, without much hope. Sometimes the noise reminds me of an animal shelter, where the dogs are always barking and you know you cannot save them all.

II. March

Babies scream, the freeways roar, the hills are lost in haze. The babies in their mist tents have disappeared in white fog, so that only occasionally does a pale hand appear through the mist, clutching at the plastic wall. A paralyzed girl roars down the hall in her motorized wheelchair, guided by a rubber disc held in her mouth.

"I can't believe it," I say. I show Izzy the chart I've been reading. "Fifteen years old—it says she weighs twenty-seven pounds."

"They must mean kilos," Izzy says.

"No, it says pounds. Underlined."

We look at each other and laugh. My white coat sticks to my back, my hair against my forehead. It's just like summer in the Midwest, an inversion of sky so that clouds rest on the ground, which is hot as though the sun is blazing underneath.

"She must be a midget," I say.

"Mike's gone to pick her up," Izzy says. "Transport from St. Barab-bas."

The girl in the wheelchair, who has a moon-face with bulging cheeks and a bridgeless nose, stops for a moment by us, then roars down the straightaway.

"C-3 section," Izzy says.

"What?"

"Her spinal cord, severed at C-3, up in the neck. No one knows how she breathes."

"Jesus," I say. An image arises in my mind, from Fellini's *Satyricon*—two dwarves, both double amputees, the legless man riding on the armless man's shoulders, held by a leather harness. A rude Italian joke. It's as though I haven't really *seen* the sick kids before today, not the really sick ones who won't ever become whole, the ones who make Pediatrics so

much more depressing than Medicine.

"Here's Mike," says Izzy. The wheelchair girl maneuvers to let them pass: Mike and a white-suited ambulance driver pushing a gurney with our twenty-seven pound patient. They turn at the desk, and pass toward the ICU. All I see of the patient is a head. The rest, what there is, is covered with a bulky red blanket.

We follow them inside.

To transfer her to the bed they have stripped off the blanket. She is not a midget.

"Oh. My. God." Izzy says three sentences. She is naked.

"Not so loud."

Izzy gestures to me to get the IV bottle. The plastic tubing moves across this Giacometti figure, this abstraction of the human form, this giant fetus, pink skeleton. I hesitate to describe her more, I am not shy about looking, though, as I hold the IV bottle above my head: she is alive, she *moves* on the bed.

"Let's get the fluids running," says Izzy. "Come on, man. Turn it on. A hundred cc's an hour. Let it all drip in."

I open it all the way.

O'Halloran, our Attending, holds court in the Intensive Care Unit over our twenty-seven pounder. Her name is Gonzales. Her parents stand at the edge of her bed, side by side, Filipino Gothic: short, dark and burdened as are all immigrants who hope their children will be straighter and lighter and will not despise them. Their curled daughter lies motionless.

O'Halloran shoos the parents out. "Just a few minutes please."

He lights up an unfiltered Marlboro, the labelled end out. Smoke goes through the ICU. The Peds Residents shift uncomfortably. He rambles on and on about fluids, smoking one cigarette after another.

Izzy whispers, "If he wasn't in a white coat he'd be the typical VA patient."

I examine O'Halloran and nod. He has the belly, the nose, the beety complexion, the crow's feet, the cough. And the wandering mind.

"Partial aphasia," Izzy whispers, as if reading my mind.

"Wernicke-Korsakoff?" I say. The alkies' scrambled sanctuary.

Four hours of the day are wasted

in Rounds, telling the same stories over and over to O'Halloran who does not seem to remember what he has heard. For the fourth or fifth time he asks the same questions:

"Is the D5W running for NG replacement? Urine replacement? Are you on the K+ scale? What about gavage? Have you given a thought to nutrition?"

Izzy and Mike mock him behind his back, smoke cigarettes made of air, stick out their bellies. The heat is intolerable. It is a wintry heat, barren and suffocating, not a change of season. Haze creeps up the flats of the city toward us, making us lose the houses only a few blocks away. The thick atmosphere suspends us.

The twenty-seven pounder will live if we can force enough fluids down her.



These are fragments. Maybe from a distance they will add up to something—form an image out of dots, a moral tale from unfinished anecdotes. In truth I don't recall Robby's death anymore; I've seen enough others that it's been erased. But it is here in my notes, so it must have happened. I don't know about the twenty-seven pounder either, whether she survived: all I have afterward is notes for a story I never wrote.

Mountains. Mineral and steam baths, old paintings on concrete walls. Californians. A monkey in his cage. A child in leg braces by the pool. Steam: sulphurous, sticky, rolling through the pines. Cottages. Circular drive. Broken glass. A disconsolate observer, obsessive and inactive.

"Where is Dr. Chalupa?" asks the interpreter, a short woman in blue polyester. "The parents say Dr. Chalupa was going to take care of their baby."

The parents stand beside the baby's crib. The mother, a careworn

middleaged woman, looks at me with a kind of patient loathing; and the father, moustached, stout, in an old windbreaker, stares at the floor. Neither of them speak English.

"Tell them," I say, "That Dr. Chalupa may come and visit, but that the housestaff will be taking care of the baby." No one here has heard of Dr. Chalupa.

The interpreter explains in Spanish, and the parents respond with passion and anger. She says, "They have been here before and they have had a very bad experience. They feel that the doctors were experimenting on their baby."

"Experimenting?" I say. For the first time I get a good look at the baby propped in its crib. It is not a baby but rather a small monster, with low ears, a flat, bridgeless nose, a hairline scarcely an inch above its close-set eyes. It makes a repetitive cry that might be that of a normal baby if it were not so divorced from anguish. And it rocks, back and forth, with motions of its stunted, muscular limbs. "Can you explain," I say, "that we want to take care of the baby. We're not going to experiment."

"They do not want any tests done."

"I'm sure we'll have to do some. Blood tests, a chest x-ray."

She does not even have to consult this time; the mother shakes her head no.

I sigh. "Tell her to wait; I'll go get my Resident."

I can't find Izzy, but Emily, the Senior Resident is at the nursing station. I explain the situation, watching her delicately immobile face. She has auburn hair, and a smooth face covered entirely with freckles a shade lighter than her hair, and an expression of complete, unperturbable self-possession, grounded in generations, so I have heard, of Back Bay sovereignty. She comes from the Mayflower on both sides. She never plays with the babies.

"Why is the child here?" she asks.

"Possible pneumonia, versus congestive heart failure."

"Let me go talk to them."

When we return to the room the parents are standing at the crib, trying to quiet the baby.

"They are going to take the baby home," says the interpreter.

Emily begins speaking to the parents—in Spanish. The parents cannot be as surprised as I am to hear her, fluent, controlled, soothing. I won-

der where on earth she learned this. She bargains with the mother. They are two women in a market haggling over a fish or an embroidered shirt, the mother passionate and outraged, Emily deft and cool. Finally she turns to me.

"I think we've got it. We'll admit the baby but we won't do any tests without consulting them and explaining everything. All right?"

"Sure."

I examine the baby, watched by the suspicious parents. It cries as I touch it, pushing me away with dwarfish thick hands, grunting, moaning, sniffing through its snotty nose—a hairless rodent trapped in a human body. I know the parents' anger must grow from love, but when I think of this creature and the twenty-seven pounder and the nine-month baby who has never left the Intensive Care Unit since birth, who has been fed through a hole in his belly so long he has forgotten how to suck—it seems it would be a mercy to . . . to what? Drown them like cats in a burlap sack, thrown off a bridge? I shake those thoughts away. Ridiculous. We're here to help.

I examine, I touch, I fight the grasping clutch of the baby—its name is Teresa—I shine a light in its eyes and it shakes its head like a dog. The parents step close. I finish in a rush.

At the nurses' station I find Emily resting against the counter. She looks up without curiosity as I approach.

"I learned Spanish in Barcelona," she says. "I find it useful here in the Valley."

In the morning a Professor from the main hospital arrives. Dr. de Vita. He is a round, excitable Italian; I present a patient with Nephrotic Syndrome, who we discuss for a few minutes; then he interrupts me.

"I am sorry, I have nothing to add," he says. "This sort of patient I am not interested in. Have you any congenital anomalies instead?"

I look at Emily. "Teresa. She's a funny-looking baby."

"Funny? How is funny?" de Vita rises from his chair, agitated with what might seem to be fury but is, I see, feverish interest.

"Well, she's a two and a half year old child, who presents with possible pneumonia . . ."

"I am not interested. I want to know, what are her findings? How far apart are her eyes? What is her skull circumference? Is her upper trunk

large or small compared to her legs? How are her ears shaped? Well?"

Everyone turns to me.

"I didn't measure head circumference."

"My God! You didn't measure? You can tell me nothing. Come, I only have a few minutes, let's see the baby. Do you have a tape measure?"

He herds us into Teresa's room, tense and passionate, grabs a paper tape measure.

"Amazing!" he says. "Look at this—epicanthic folds, low-set ears, decreased skull circumference. And see, the skin . . ." He pinches her belly, her ribs. "It has the loose elasticity of the Ehlers Danlos Syndrome but it is not typical of Ehlers Danlos—the joints are hyperflexible, yet . . . yet . . ."

I burn in embarrassment. Emily, across the crib, looks at me blandly. I want to despise her but am incapable of anything except awe and yearning, like some poor Henry James character mooning after someone he won't get—Ralph Touchett after Isabel Archer.

"Tell me," says de Vita, "What studies are you doing on this baby?"

"Well, the parents don't want her to be . . ."

"I don't care. What are the results?"

Surprisingly, Emily talks. "It is a very touchy situation with the family."

"How is ignorance better than knowledge?" says de Vita.

"What good will it do the family to know?" Emily says. "There's no cure for what she has."

De Vita glares at us.

"I am late for a meeting. I have to leave. But this child, she is fascinating, she is wonderful. Do studies.

Chromosome analysis, urine reducing substances, fibroblast cultures. And measure everything. See why she is so small. When did she stop growing? This is fascinating. What again is the baby's name?"

"Teresa."

That evening, after dinner, the father comes by. I explain through the interpreter that the baby has neither heart failure nor pneumonia, only a bad cough. The father seems disappointed. He tells the interpreter he is tired of the experiments and is taking Teresa home. Izzy and even Emily cannot stop him.

The next morning, after Rounds, I am paged to the nurses' station. The clerk is placating someone over the phone when I get there.

"You called me?"

"Yes. It is a Dr. Chalupa. He is calling about Teresa."

"She went home."

"She went home," the clerk says.

"Yes, if you would like to talk to someone, the medical student is here." She looks at me. "I see. All right. Thank you. Goodbye." She hangs up. "A Dr. Chalupa. He did not want to talk to a medical student."

Notes on O'Halloran:

"And the main test for congenital . . . congenital . . . uh . . . congenital adrenal hyperplasia is . . . uh . . . uhh . . ." O'Halloran motions to Emily for help.

"ACTH stimulation test," Emily says.

"Well, that is *one*, but I was thinking of . . ."

"Plasma cortisol?"

O'Halloran shakes his head.

"Urine cortisol?"

Again.



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"Metapyrone test?"

"That's it. Meta . . . pie . . . anyhow, doesn't matter . . ."

O'Halloran has admitted a perfectly healthy baby for workup of congenital adrenal hyperplasia.

"He had an a.m. plasma cortisol of 1.9 with a lower limit of normal of 2.0," says O'Halloran. "And I measured his penis at 2.4 centimeters, where the normal for his age is 2.6 to 3.4."

"But the other cortisol values were normal," says Emily. "Just that one was low."

"Measure his penis, you'll agree he has microphallus."

Emily goes in with paper tape measure, comes back a few minutes later:

"I got 5.0."

Izzy nudges me. "The kid ain't blind."

We all go in to see the kid; Emily and O'Halloran alternate measuring with the paper tape.

"You'll do the Meta . . . Meta test," says O'Halloran. "Don't have to do the ACTH stimulation test. But I have a feeling, *more* than a feeling, I *know* this boy's got congenital adrenal hyperplasia. I don't want him waiting around the hospital all week for the cortisols to come back. Get on that Meta . . . Meta test right away."

All tests come back normal.

Midnight of my night on, I lie down for awhile in the "submarine"—a small windowless room between the Pediatric Nursery and the Obstetrics ward, with lockers on one side, a bed on the other, a bathroom at one end. The walls reverberate, and I hear echoes of every breath I take, and a watch inside one of the lockers is as loud as a kitchen timer. From somewhere very close I hear a woman in labor: "Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God!" Lying curled, with my head toward the wall, I imagine her on the other side of the wall, flat on her back, big bellied, fecund, sweating. She cries, and I lie in my sweaty greens, trying to sleep. Then I hear:

"Pediatrician to Delivery *STAT*!"

I make myself get up, put on shoes and glasses, stumble out to the ward.

"Action's over in OB," says a voice behind me.

The night clerk. A girl with a school book. I run past her to OB.

Izzy is waiting with a towel in his hands. The Obstetrician is hard at work.

"Just in time," he says. "This is a heavy mec stainer, a thirty-two weeker with PROM, mother febrile to 102° and they're having a hell of a time getting the kid out."

I hear:

"Oh God! Oh my God!" and "Push! Push!"

It doesn't come out good. It doesn't pink up like the ones I've seen before; in fact it hardly moves when Izzy rams the ET tube down its throat.

"Suck!" he calls. "Come on damn it, suck!" The nurse joggles the baby's plum-colored limbs, which move feebly. "Bag it, bag it, then suction. Let's get this mec *out*."

He sees me on the periphery.

"Go on over to the Nursery, tell them we've got a heavy mec stainer coming."

When I return, he says, "What do you think its Apgars were?"

"Five and six?"

He shakes his head. "Two and five. This kid stinks. The mom weighs two hundred and twenty pounds; didn't even know she was pregnant. Doesn't want to see the kid."

I see her in the room, mountainous and immobile. The tiny Indian Obstetric Resident, with red forehead dot showing below her blue cap, still works between her legs. The mother's head is turned away from us, toward the wall.

"Okay, let's bag this kid on the way over to the Nursery," Izzy says.

I follow.

III. April

Then I am rotated over to the Outpatient Clinics, and spend mornings in a small office on a long, dingy corridor, seeing babies with coughs and earaches, using my few words of Spanish to ask about formula and immunizations. I ask about carseats, to those who know enough English: do they know how many babies fly loose in cars, hitting their heads, breaking their small bodies? They should be strapped in for sudden stops. I hand out pamphlets about carseats. Nights I'm on call in the Emergency Room.

One night I'm on call with Izzy. I haven't seen Izzy much this month, except occasionally in the cafeteria or a conference, or, more often, out the window of my examining room, from a distance, on his way out to the parking lot, or coming back in. Some days

he goes back and forth several times. I'm struck tonight how lousy Izzy looks, pale, gray-skinned, tired; and I wonder if I look the same. I do have a persistent scratching at the back of my throat—probably some virus picked up from the kids—and I'm tired most of the time.

Tonight we see a Samoan baby with a cold, and a little black girl born without arms. We give the little armless girl's mother a prescription for Ampicillin, then sit in the glass-enclosed nurses' cubicle, eating dinner on trays from the cafeteria.

Izzy tells me about Arizona, where he'd been before he came here.

"It was intense," he says. "Seven of us running a fifty-bed hospital in the middle of nowhere. We were together twenty-four hours a day, so any little thing could build up until someone was annihilated. I saw it happen. You made a little mistake and somebody would get on your back. I saw a guy, a really smart guy, a good doc, get torn apart by another guy who just had a grudge. It was a little different for me, of course, because I had a wife and kid."

"Had?" I say.

"Well, she's in Arizona still."

I consider asking him about the kid, and decide not to.

"She came out here for awhile," he says. "Four months into my Internship. She left in a week."

"Oh," I say. "You going back to Arizona when you finish?"

"I'm not going to finish," he says. "At least not next year. I need to make some money, and spend some time with my kid."

"Sounds like a good life," I say.

He looks at me strangely, and something seems to break free in him.

"My time's not my own," he says. "My wife and I are divorcing, and I have the kid right now. He's three. I've got to be a better mother for him than his mother can be. I mean, what judge would say to a mother who wants a kid, who's willing to spend all day at home with him, that she can't have him?"

"That's terrible," I say. "That's a terrible situation. You really want your kid, hunh."

He's almost crying. I'm embarrassed. I look down at the cornhusks piled to the side of my plate, and the sludge of refried beans.

"Listen," he says. "Why don't you go back to the Peds section, see if

there's any more patients. I've got to go out to my car."

"Again?" I say, but he's gotten up already, leaving his tray behind.

In Cubicle 12 there's a three year old girl with an earache. Her left tympanic membrane bulges. Simple: Ampicillin for ten days. I examine, diagnose, reassure, then go out in search of Izzy. I find Izzy in Cubicle 1, right in front of the nurses' station, where the sickest cases go; he's staring at a man lying in bed. He is a middle-aged man with black hair, and his skin is blanched, and his bare feet look like porcelain, and his chest runs with sweat.

"See?" Izzy whispers. "This is Dr. Xavier, one of our Attendings."

"You're kidding."

"No. Came in with nausea and vomiting, severe chest pain. After work. Just closed up his office . . . his nurse found him sitting in his car. He's fifty-four years old."

The ER Resident comes up with the EKG. It shows an acute myocardial infarction, multiple PVC's, complete left bundle branch block.

"Jesus," says Izzy. "He's a pediatrician. This isn't supposed to happen to pediatricians. A surgeon has an MI, you expect it—he killed himself. But the old family doc in the Valley . . ."

"Didn't smoke or drink," says the ER Resident. "He's in good shape too."

The Medicine Resident comes down, and the Surgery Resident after him. Dr. Xavier lies motionless on the gurney, the nurse trying to get another IV into his waxy right hand.

"Forget it. We'll do it in the OR. Let's go. We're going to get a balloon in him."

"He's going to die," Izzy says.

Soon they wheel Dr. Xavier away. I'm rather shaken myself: it's altogether too much, another story starting when you're least ready for it, unavoidable, a lesson in mortality that is altogether redundant.

A diabetic girl comes in just as the earache leaves. Fortunately she keeps us busy until midnight. Then there's nothing.

"This your last night?" Izzy says.

I tell him yes. I get my coat and backpack.

"Well, I wanted to tell you, you did a really good job here. Hey, you going out now?"

I nod.

"Let me walk with you," he says.

"Sure."

We walk out of the ER. Izzy tests his beeper.

"I've got to go to my car," he says.

"Again? How come you're always going to your car?"

"Oh, I keep my dog there," Izzy says.

I don't believe him.

"Yeah, I do," he says. "I had another dog which I kept at home but he got stolen. So I keep this one in my car. I park in the shade. He's a crazy dog. After the first couple days, he *wanted* to be in the car. Now he can hardly stand it out of the car. He's a really crazy dog."

I shake my head. We're past the waiting room now and outside, in the humid Valley air. There's a vague pain in my chest, or more in my upper midbelly, as though someone elbowed me there. Most likely it's from the refried beans and enchiladas, but it's bad enough to make me hunch over as we walk.

"I come out and feed him and take him for walks any chance I get," Izzy says. I head off toward my car, he turns toward his. "Hey, you did a good job, a really good job," he calls after me. "I mean it."

"He made it onto the balloon all right," says Cindy, who is in my class in med school. She'd been doing Cardiology at the Valley when I was on Peds. We're back up at the University now, in the green California suburbs, away from the scorched Valley—in fact we're sitting on the edge of the grassy bank beside the outdoor swimming pool, watching people do their laps. It's warm now, just in the last few days it is pleasant enough to sit and sun, and there are families at the far end of the pool, mothers and babies and toddlers on blankets. Suburban families. And in the water, three little boys splashing each other and a father holding a little girl, teaching her to float. She splashes and giggles and squeals.

"His MAP was only fifty and his wedge was something incredible—thirty-eight, forty—but he was perfusing all right. But around three a.m. he just arrested and that was it. It's too bad. He really hadn't been having chest pain or anything," Cindy says. "Just dull pressure that came and went. Not even angina. He was thinking of going to his doctor the next week to have it checked out. There wasn't much reason to worry."

I lie back and look at the sun.

—David Hellerstein

My father pointed and said it was a weed. I knew already. It was a weed, all right; it wasn't grass, grass looked like a crewcut. All the slim soldiers of grass stood together in an orderly crowd, all standing upright to the same height. You could run your hand over them softly and they softly pressed back. A weed was a low sprawling thing, like a kid who has decided she is going to keep you from getting your towel that you need by stretching out all over it, so there's no way you can reach under all those arms and legs to jerk it out. A weed had extra arms, five or six of them, and lay discouragingly low to the ground. It made itself flat and stiff, like that kid. And once you saw one of them, suddenly you saw lots. Where had they come from?

My father's hand. The little cracks of my father's hand—not the big ones only, but all the little cracks too—were colored brown. My father said he washed his hands with Ajax and the brown still didn't come out. I watched him, and sure enough he made a lather but the brown in the lines didn't go away. I didn't dare try to put Ajax on my hands, I thought it would scrape the skin right off. The brown came from his work. I guess he didn't like it that it wouldn't wash out, but it didn't bother me. That was the way he came. I had come punier and paler. His fingers were thick and strong, but when we matched palms, my hand was almost as long. I had a different hand. He said it was a good one for the weeds, though.

My father set his hand on the ground next to that weed. Somehow he got his big fingers, all of them, under its arms, and then he bunched his fingers together in a fist and bunched all the arms together, and twisted his wrist and twisted all the arms, flapping out of his fist on top, and pulled—and the whole weed came up. All its whitish limp legs dangled down feebly. You wouldn't think to look at them that when you tried, all those legs you couldn't see *clung* into the ground so hard, the way your brother's fingers clutched your stick that he wouldn't give back. You gave a twist and a pull, and the whole silly top of the plant came off in your hand, with all the legs left in the ground to grow a whole new plant. There was a right way to do it and a

To the Ground

wrong way. If you didn't collect all the sprawling arms the weed wouldn't come up, and if you collected them all but didn't twist your wrist hard enough to hurt it wouldn't come up, and if you twisted until your wrist hurt a lot it might still leave some of itself under the ground.

It was better to squat under the little new yew trees that my father had planted, and dig holes. The ground there was soft enough to poke a finger straight down into it. On the top was a crust, and when you crumpled it, it was as dry and soft as dustballs. It was the color of perfect toast, yellow. Sometimes I found a cake of coffee grounds under a yew. My mother told my father not to do that. When I poked the cake, it fell into dark crumbs, it looked more like real ground than our ground. My father said where we lived had been ocean floor and you couldn't grow beans in it. My mother said if you lived in the city all you could expect was to be able to sit out and look at the stars, but a few geraniums would be nice. My father had a box of dirt with white spots in it in the yard, but it didn't grow flowers, it had skinny pieces of tree stuck into it. Some of them came from the yews, and sometimes their needles, which were not sharp, turned pale, which meant they were sick. Next thing you knew, all the needles were lying on the dirt in the box. After that we cut more pieces of the yew and stuck them in

the dirt again. And sometimes after I was weeding a long time I made a hill of all the weeds I had pulled up. That was a good heap, that was good work, that was the way to go.

Thirty years later I bought a neck of woods where the trees grow tall, and so close and dense that on the clearest night you could scarcely see a star. The wind roars in the leaves and limbs, the rain crashes through their wild lattice, nuts drop from their ledges and roll like boulders down the roof. A lake wraps itself recurrently around the land, but I, looking up at the trees, scarcely notice it. I am a city girl, and I need to gaze a long solemn time at these trunks before I feel their steadiness, and stomp on the ground a long time before I know it is my ground. I took my shoes off the first summer and never really put them back on. And this is what happened—a part of what happened—on my ground.

I did my stomping dance and then I just walked around placing one foot in front of another. Everything pleased me except one thing: under the hood of trees the sun couldn't reach to warm a berry, and wild-flowers all came up looking like Indian pipes, as if they had been bled to frailty. So a machine came and sucked two trees out of the ground and smoothed over the holes and went away—leaving a smell of root-beer—without having disturbed the peace for more than a minute. My sacred clearing gave me a porthole on the stars. And for the first time I had shadows. First the shadows stretched out to my right, and later they lay out toward my left, and then it was time slowly to pick up books and lotion and glasses and go inside. That was a day, by woods' time.

The second summer in the clearing I stubbed my toe on new shoots. They were everywhere, threatening to be trees and restore total eclipse. When I pulled at one, I found I had an end of something that had no beginning: shoot became root and root was bound, invisibly, deep into the earth. Pulling hand over hand I unearthed it as if it were jungle vine, until it went too deep for my strength and I had to stop in frustration.

But I had a pair of clippers that were my father's clippers: he had used them to cut the hard old rose



canes out of the rosebushes that grew in front of the house, and to cut the slips that went into the propagation vermiculite. "Sharp enough to take off your thumb," he said when he wielded them in my childhood, and "sharp enough to take off your thumb" he warned when he gave them to me about ten years before his death. With his clippers I slit the root that wanted to be a tree, down low where its life was slender as thread. Each time I blindly clipped deep in the soil a voice in my head said protectively, "Thumb, thumb, thumb."

By this time I was up to my elbows in the dirt. For someone who had walked barefoot since the beginning I had wandered a long time before looking at what I pressed and stomped on. It was the blackest soil I'd ever seen, and it was moist and cool and springy to the touch. A clump of it came off like a thick luxurious pad, held together by webs of invisible roots. It was so nutritious that the oaks and the tupeloes and the sassafras couldn't help but shoot out of it like weeds. But except for shoots in the wrong place, there *were* no weeds. Instead there were tiny apparitions that turned out to be Mayflower, touch-me-not, wind anemone: I knew if I gave them more chance they would make a meadow, starrng themselves.

I followed the sun around my clearing, in a steady rhythm delving with one hand, clipping with the other. When my shadow lay long and thin and I tried to get up, I was so tired that I let myself fall forward instead onto an elbow on the cushioned ground. The languor of fatigue was delicious. I breathed the wholesome air of turned earth, earth I had turned. My left hand lay in front of me, curled from work into a loose fist: through its opening I could see, contentedly, many dead lengths of root. It is a good hand, as I've often thought: the fingers a little thick for beauty, perhaps, but muscular for work. As it lay there on the ground, though, it did not look entirely like my hand. The skin was lined all over with shallow criss-cross cracks, like a Japanese raku pot, a product of much labor. What made the minute trace-ries so visible was that they were darkened with black dirt. It looked as if I had dipped my hand into a dye that had run off, staining only the crevices. It was, after all, a familiar hand.

—Margaret Morganroth Gullette

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Metaphysical Tales, by Eugene K. Garber. Missouri. \$12.95

Any seven collections of fiction published ten years ago by unknown or scarcely-known writers would most likely have reflected the sense of aesthetic experiment, the search for new and radically different forms of storytelling that prevailed then.

The books in this batch do the opposite; they show that the short fiction which prevails in the 1980s is, primarily, the simple, old-fashioned story. With one exception, these seven authors seem not at all interested in searching for new forms or for new ways to look at stories. Their writing, aesthetically conservative as it is, reflects the conservatism that now rules American life and politics. Taken as a whole, these books (and most others I've read recently) suggest that the revolution in fiction, like the political one that occurred alongside it, has either died or gone underground.

Does the university press origination of these volumes have anything to do with this conservatism? Given the increase of writers as faculty members in the past two decades, it has stood to reason that the university presses would increase their quotient of fiction; whether that fiction is more conservative or "academic" than the general run of what's being written is a difficult question. It's safe to say that these books are no *more* adventurous than the general run from the New York houses, but I'm not sure they're less so.

Still, one wonders if university presses shouldn't open themselves up as havens for those whose books are too literary or experimental for the profit-makers.

The most complete and well-made of the seven is Levi S. Peterson's moving set of tales of Mormonism, *The Canyons of Grace*. Peterson, who

Seven Storybooks

teaches at Weber State in Ogden, Utah, has won two short fiction awards from the Association for Mormon Letters. His stories—there are but six in this 135-page volume—are all well-plotted, feature interesting characters and moral dilemmas, and end in satisfying ways.

Peterson's subjects are superficially specific to the Church of the Latter Day Saints and its offshoots, but the moral dilemmas involved are universal enough to keep anyone interested. In "The Confessions of Augustine," a young man's affair with a woman "outside the Covenant" creates distress with his parents, while his sexual encounters with his lover turn his life into "a harrowing cycle of penance and fornication." In keeping with the story's title, Peterson's narrator invokes Augustine, uses the saint's own life of the flesh as rationale for his own, and—finally—confesses.

"I will speak honestly." And the narrator does, telling of Augustine's abusive treatment of the woman whose son he fathered, then confessing, to himself and to us, that the memory of Annie, his erstwhile lover, is still within him. The equation between this character and St. Augustine is a simple one, but Peterson's almost incantatory rhetoric gives it a moral power of unusual force.

In the equally vivid title story, Arabella Gurney, a maiden of thirty, makes the momentous decision to discard her virginity and, with it, much of her Mormon background. The man of her choice is Franklin, a free-spirited fellow graduate student on an anthropological excavation. Peterson handles the delicate dance between them brilliantly. I might have found a story limited to Arabella's ambivalence about breaking the sex barrier powerful enough as is. But Peterson, to his credit, seems

always willing to push a story to the outer limits of moral importance. In this case, Arabella is innocently munching hamburgers at a roadside diner when Reuben Millring, fanatical polygamist and leader of an outlaw branch of the Mormon church, places his hands on her head and pronounces her his wife.

Peterson shows his major weakness as a writer at this point by attempting to *describe* Arabella's feelings ("electric sensations surged in her belly and thighs"). But the story quickly gets back on its bizarre track toward a totally believable and unstoppable kidnapping of Arabella, followed by a surprising finale.

Reading *The Canyons of Grace* is a moving, sometimes frightening ride through an unfamiliar but powerfully American territory. Levi S. Peterson's land of the Latter Day Saints is shown to be more complex than the outsider might imagine; in the clash of old-fashioned characters and bygone doctrines against the pressures of contemporary America, stories are born. Peterson, though not an experimenter with form or technique, knows where those stories ought to begin and end.

A second Illinois book that deserves praise is David Long's *Home Fires*. The title alone could make a self-reflexive postmodernist quiver, but Long's subjects are not confined to hearth and home. In general, he writes about citizens of the American West who are in one way or another socially disenfranchised. Like Peterson, Long is a devout practitioner of the complete story.

The characters carry quirky names that signify their personalities. Like good Westerners, they spend much of their time on the road, yet their movements seem mostly lateral. Their lives are dark and troubled; nevertheless, there are always a few literal and several metaphoric rays of sunshine available.

In "Like Some Distant Crying," Celestia, whose past is mysterious, remakes a decrepit hot springs resort into her own personal jacuzzi, against the wishes of Murphy, who has presided over the decay of the place. Since this is the West but not the Southern California West, Celestia's need for a warm swim is not hedonistic but spiritual. She seems to have selected the site randomly, and Mur-

phy's frazzled protests and irregular, lazy habits reinforce her vigor. By the story's end, they are swimming together in the refurbished spring, and the effect is moving.

What it all means is a little more obscure; I think Long is deliberately writing about that kind of central question. The important thing for his characters is to keep moving, to live active lives. Most of them are not likely to stay indoors and fret; they want to avoid becoming bored or warped. And so they go, from Montana to California with a load of old boards to be sold at huge markups to the chic in Los Angeles, from the deep Southwest to the Canada border to run from both the law and their home lives.

Running generally fails to take them to better places, especially in the horrifying story "Border Crossing," in which the two protagonists, Carver and T.R., commit gratuitous murder. But achievement—the sense of doing something, anything, well—is vital. Fortunately, Long has the good sense to stop before any of his protagonists makes a million dollars or becomes President; he lets his characters roam within the well-set bounds of their environment. And when one of them considers a total breakaway, as in the final and title story, he realizes wisely that he'd better not.

David Long is a skilled user of the little aside that seems like an insight and later grows into a powerful signifier. He introduces sentences with clauses like "In the new life," which seems harmless when positioned early in the stories but which reverberate later. Sometimes the execution of these touches is better than at others, but in general Long is able to hold the fictions together with nice strokes of language. Often, the insights seem to arise out of slight twists in dialogue and the rhythm of the narration.

Long is a fine writer, but I found myself a little dulled by the stories if I read too many at once. That may be the result of a little too much sameness of structure, though there's plenty of variance in theme and character here. I couldn't help noticing the nearly identically structured, poetic last paragraphs in each of the stories in *Home Fires*, though. That's too much of a good thing.

Definition 2a of "pastorale" in *Webster's Third New International Diction-*

ary: "written in homely, muted prose, about life on a farm." Susan Engber's *Pastorale*, also in the Illinois Short Fiction Series, is a collection of eight such stories, most of them centering around modern domestic lives in trouble. I like the themes of Engber's fiction better than the execution. In the title story, Laurits, a young boarder, invades the farm and in doing so helps Catherine, the protagonist, clarify and begin to break out of her sadness, which is primarily due to a boring marriage and the tragic death of her ten-year-old daughter. The plot is a solid and simple one, but the pacing plods, and there is too much exposition. At certain moments, such as the waiting out of a storm by Catherine and Laurits, I am drawn fully into the story, but then there are sequences like this:

"You look ravishing and curative," he said as he stretched and threw aside his book. His stiff hair was raked up and the creases beneath his eyes looked personal and contemplative.

"I'm frazzled and sick," she said. "You're just playing the lascivious old man again; none of it is genuine." But she went to him and sat down close, laying a hand on his chest.

"Spending an afternoon in bed has had certain effects," he said.

"You've improved your mind and the state of your health, I hope."

"My mind has been rotting away with carnal lust. For you of course, my dear," he added.

"You sound venerable," she said as she rested her weight against him . . .

Granted, what's being described here is a relationship fallen into monotony, but Engber crosses into the perilous zone with this kind of dialogue.

Toward the end of "Pastorale," the conversation stops, and the writer's voice takes over.

Today she was thinking about how much this vast swelling land seemed to have retained its character of primordial ocean floor, and her own eyes were seeing it: the knowledge of a progression through millenia to this present moment of late-summer dry lushness and quiet was passing through her, making her a special child of the universal elements. She stepped off the road and sat down in the minimal shade of an Osage orange tree, looking up with curiosity at the globs of wrinkled greenish fruit. It was true: she felt almost like a child, and what was more, she was gradually understanding that her own lost child was being returned to her, not as she in

her suffering had dreamt of the reunion, but simply as she herself was moving to the embrace.

My own aesthetic bias says that the last page of a story is too late for this much summation, although many good writers are guilty of it. Strangely, Engber's insights into domestic life are good enough, and her intelligence crisp enough, to override many of the weaknesses of *Pastorale*. "A masterly chronicler of the domestic, a writer who trusts in daily life to yield up significant experience," says James Atlas on the back cover. Agreed, but one longs for more *oomph* to the prose.

Nothing could differ more from *Pastorale* than a collection of short, possibly bogus tales about the white destruction of the aboriginal culture in Australia. B. Wongar's *Babaru* consists of twelve pieces, most featuring non-human characters, some even narrated by animals. Fantastic things happen in this world, where scientific definitions of sentience and life hold no meaning.

As fiction, these stories are interesting primarily because of the magic within them and because of our unfamiliarity with the aboriginal cultures. Although most of us know little enough about the histories and lives of native Americans and Latin Americans, we know even less about Australians. I think of these stories as palatable vehicles for the spreading of information about the culture, but I'm less enamored of them as fictions. The tales are, for the most part, too sketchy and expository.

Wongar, according to the book jacket, "lives among and writes about his people—the aboriginals of northern Australia. Born just before World War II, Wongar grew up and was educated in Europe before returning to his native culture. Inspired by his people's determined resistance to the erosive impact of white society and industrial plunder of their lands, Wongar began to write. He published his first story in 1970 and has since received numerous literary awards."

Following a glowing review by Thomas Keneally, a letter to *The New York Times Book Review* claimed that "Wongar" was really the pseudonym of a failed white Australian writer who had found a new subject and fame along with it. If that's so, Wongar's bio and the longer version of it that came with the review copy may be the best fictions of all.

Whatever the origins of Wongar and this, his second book, it's certain that the dismemberment of the aboriginal cultures by the white colonizers is a subject that deserves more and better coverage by Australia's writers and America's publishers.

Another technical comment: Since B. Wongar's identity is a secret, there is no black-and-white photograph on the cover of this volume, and the change is refreshing. Someday, one wishes that the cover designers of the Illinois books would catch up with the importance of the fiction series in general, and spare us the enormous photos of all those nice-looking fiction writers.

Probably the most disappointing of the seven books here is David Walton's *Evening Out*, first winner of the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction from the University of Georgia Press. Unlike Long and Peterson, who teach at universities but seem gracefully able to avoid writing about the world of academe, Walton falls into that modern-day trap. His stories aren't particularly *about* the dramas of debates on the faculty senate, which wouldn't be entirely disastrous if done well, but they do seem to center around the world of gentrified academic ghettos, of renovated slums and artsy cafes.

The title story is representative of the book's problems. It begins: "I was at the typewriter, working on an examination of structural patterns in Huysmans' *Against The Grain*, when Carol Cole called.

" 'Come have dinner with us,' she said."

Satire? Unfortunately, apparently not. The story "Evening Out" begins with the aforementioned dinner, which involves the narrator, a woman named Bobette, Carol, and her husband Larry, who has just brought back several dozen oysters from New Orleans. The four consume a horrifying quantity of oysters until Carol rebels, with little notice and seemingly less motivation, and begins to smash up the lovely remodeled home in which the story is taking place. Various pieces of glassware and minor appliances are smashed brutally while husband Larry says, "She gets like this sometimes," and the narrator and Bobette are huddled together on a windowsill. Finally, though, our narrator acts:

"When she moved in on the hanging desk, though, that I'd been the one to spot at the Etna flea market the last October, I had to intervene."

But his feeble intervention, which comes in the form of a mild suggestion that Carol stop destroying the painstakingly refurbished home, is brushed off, and he and Bobette end up at an artsy cafe. We learn that Bobette hates being at the cafe, but that she goes just because it's the place to be seen. Finally, wild youngsters splash the couple with mud and water, and Larry and Carol, having made up (or at least having effected a truce), help them off with their clothes, and everyone cuddles in bed.

It all *sounds* like satire, but it doesn't read like it. The jabs just aren't wicked or original enough; one fears that Walton has not established enough distance from his narrator in this and other stories in the volume. In all the stories in this volume, there are moments of strength. Crazy insights surface momentarily but are swallowed up by the aimless nature of the prose. The stories seem to be narratives without real plots or plans; one can't tell why these pieces begin or end where they do.

"Synaphongenuphon" seems to want to have some kind of aesthetic trick to it, but I'm mystified by the occasional breakdown (*literal* breakdown) of the language. Why should someone put "Te4y9=synaphon" at the end of a paragraph, following it with "2w/" W E =genuphon" at the end of the next paragraph? Things tone down, though, in the following paragraph, which ends, "(t)"=". This all occurs in the midst of a rather predictable piece about an android who has to make it on his own in a hostile society once his maker dies. The theme has been handled a zillion (10²³) times in science fiction, and one wonders if Walton isn't switching genres for a lark here.

Other pieces in the volume are better: "The Gingerbread House" contains an excellently rendered road-trip sequence between two new lovers and some inspired, abrupt transitions, and "Skin and Bone" features crisp prose that matches the actions of the characters, who are practitioners of the martial arts. But the stores as wholes leave the reader in something of a state of confusion. "Skin and Bone," for example, muddles homosexuality and judo and

finishes with a well-written flourish in which the character rather suddenly changes his sexual orientation.

One senses in *Evening Out* that a good writer is at work, trying to break out of forms that don't suit him and ideas that aren't yet flesh.

Dianne Benedict's stories are "filled with luminous, often eerie connections," says Raymond Carver, who selected *Shiny Objects* for the 1982 School of Letters Award from the University of Iowa.

Benedict's fictional world is mysterious, grotesque, and compelling; it's like looking through a fractured lens. The stories seem to be taking place at a distance from the reader. Although we are close to the characters, we're seldom inside them, so that we're not always sure how a character feels or reacts to a situation. Often, Benedict will set a scene masterfully, e.g.:

The people had come to the park by the river because it was cool, now, after the rain, and they wanted to sit at the low tables under the oak trees, in the presence of heavy and abundant water, and eat their chicken and boiled eggs and whole fresh tomatoes held in the hand like a peach.

We know those people, and we've held those tomatoes, and we've sat under those oak tress. But we haven't seen what they're going to see: the body of a deaf girl floating down the river. This happens after she's bludgeoned by the deaf man she picked up in a store; the bludgeoning and heaving off a barn-loft were accidental—he did it to her in his sleep, and he has laid her in this heavy water, to be found, dead or alive (you decide) by those people with the peach-sized tomatoes.

The violence in this story, called "Where the Water is Wide," seems gratuitous to me; Benedict had a great piece in the works before taking such an unexpected turn. I'm reminded of a Kurt Vonnegut dictum that writers end stories with deaths because the deaths themselves supply the endings the writers don't want to invent. Benedict's explorations into the physical and spiritual badlands of rural East Texas are most compelling when the characters have to keep on with their lives.

I liked "Looking for Rain," in which a young girl and her grizzled grandfather go hunting together, better than some of the more violent

pieces. The two are loving adversaries; after much disagreement and general cussedness, they wait out a storm together in this fashion:

She only nudged all her little sharp knobs deeper into his back, and he felt the warm small cloud of her breath, like a cat's low down on the back of his neck.

This is well put, nicely within the context of Dianne Benedict's fictional world, though what follows waxes more poetic than it ought. The stories in *Shiny Objects* are fun to read, especially if taken one at a time; I have more trouble with them in retrospect than I did at first. It's hard not to be puzzled by the absolutely unremitting parade of grotesques here, and at times I wonder if Dianne Benedict gets away with too much. She may be using her beautiful prose and unusual ideas to mask real insight. All her grotesques seem to be afflicted as much by the world as by birth, and yet there is little notice paid to the society and era which has done the deforming. The book seems curiously (deliberately?) divorced from time and from external events. These are the kinds of characters who don't seem to read newspapers, or watch television, or have any sense at all of a world external to their own lives. Women, too, fare badly in Benedict's world; that may be inescapable, given the locale, but it's at the least unsettling.

All these qualms aside, much praise is due Dianne Benedict. She writes a masterful sentence, has a host of good ideas, and is unafraid of light surrealism and the unexpected. *Shiny Objects* is an impressive first book.

Only one of these seven writers is doing much to keep the idea of experimenting with form alive, and Eugene K. Garber is working mightily at the task. His unusual book, *Metaphysical Tales*, from the University of Missouri Press, won the AWP Award Series in Short Fiction in 1981. Like most daring books, this one has an awesome number of weaknesses, beginning with the very bad pun on the title page. Someone had the idea of drawing a braid of hair that becomes—you got it—a *tail*, presumably a metaphysical one.

There are other problems. Too many stories about the life of a professor (a subject on which there ought to be a moratorium), too much

reliance on dialogue as exposition.

Having said all that, I hasten to insist that *Metaphysical Tales* is in many ways the best of these seven books. When Garber is writing well, he is possessed with a strong vision, a wild imagination, and a versatility of subject matter that is almost Cooveresque in scope. There are stories here of young homosexual love, of obsessive explorations in Africa, of young women transformed by the visions of others into crushing influences, of strict boys' schools and later reverberations of the life there. In short, Garber seems to know no physical or temporal bounds, unlike the other writers reviewed here. He is interested in consciousness, in creating or recognizing myth, in playing with memory. There are many sections of this book I couldn't enjoy,

but the vision, though derivative at times of Hawkes, Kafka, and a whole parade of masters, is strange enough and singular enough and daring enough to compel me to return to this volume again and again.

Metaphysical Tales suggests that the idea of advancing the art of the story is not quite dead. Like all good experimenters, Garber is trying here to find ways to tell stories that fit the patterns of both the tales and the audience. I get the sense that he is just beginning to reach for his optimum form and subject, and I look forward eagerly to the day when he completes his discovery. The AWP and the editors at Missouri are to be commended for their courage in bringing a flawed, uneven and brilliant book to light.

—Michael Wilkerson

An Addiction to Honesty

Letters to Allen Ginsberg: 1953-1957, by William Burroughs. Full Court Press. \$7.95.

This is an interesting book, not just for devotees of William Burroughs's fiction, but for anyone concerned about *voice*, about what a gifted writer sounds like unmasked, when he's not trumpeting his visions through the artifice of fiction. Practically all these letters were written over a four-year period to Allen Ginsberg. The majority were written in Tangier, and tell of Burroughs's struggle to kick junk, his concern with money, his rabid sex life, his efforts to write the stories he wanted to write. They are engaging letters, written in a sardonic and mocking voice—a voice like a character in a Samuel Beckett play that grinds on and on, as if the sound were the only link between the speaker and the universe. "*Un homme de lettres. Un poème moderne*," Burroughs says of the letters; and the description is apt. The man and the "poem" are synonymous, a tribute to a kind of dogged tenacity to persist in the teeth of a malevolent universe. The voice in these letters is authentic and compulsively honest. Despite continual buffeting from personal and outside sources, it shines with insight, humor, and, by virtue of its persistence, with hope.

During the period 1953-57, Burroughs wrote much of *Naked Lunch*, and many of the letters are concerned

with the joys and tribulations of that task. Ginsberg, in Mexico and the United States, functioned as a combination confidant, critic, and agent. Burroughs sent him sections of the novel as he finished them, to critique, to edit, to find a publisher for. Ginsberg finally came to Tangier in the summer of 1957 to help shape the sprawling, unwieldy manuscript into a readable unit. At the same time Burroughs was laboring on *Naked Lunch*, he was also trying to kick his dependence on junk. He had undergone various cures, only to lapse again into the habit. By the mid-1950s, he was taking several injections daily. The dosage was affecting his work, every aspect of his life. In May 1956, he journeyed to England where he entered a clinic. The letters that follow the successful treatment are filled with humor and high spirits. Back in Tangier, he buckles down to work, his sex drive uptempo, for the first time in his life he experiences a unity of psyche and purpose. Relieved of the albatross of narcotics, he feels strengthened and invigorated. "Self-pity is . . . impossible for me," he tells Ginsberg. "You know what is wrong with it? Self-pity is a symptom of a divided ego, split into a pitied and a pitier. If your ego is intact, you *can't* pity yourself . . ."

Burroughs's angle of vision—the point of attack from which he addresses the world—is unique. His long bout with junk is in part responsible for this. "Junk is a way of life,"

he says; and, indeed, after reading these letters it's clear that, once hooked by the habit, all other concerns are swept to the margins. The poet-cum-junkie operates from a precarious position. The junkie embraces the death that, in the poet's view, civilization imposes upon its denizens. If the junkie is a poet, not only does he suffer from his perceptions, but in a grotesque parody of blighted guilt he endures that punishment physically. Junk is the perception manifest, the actualization of the belief that the universe is a hostile place. Viewed in this context, the poet becomes, as in the case of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, a martyr to the torments of an overdeveloped sensibility.

The self-mocking tone of many of these letters prevents Burroughs from succumbing to the luxury of this kind of immolation. He never sounds like a martyr because he never feels like one. He refuses to excuse or justify his behavior on the grounds of being victimized by forces beyond his control. His objectivity is pitiless; he accepts full responsibility for his acts. In a letter dated August 18, 1954, he says, "Whether you like it or not, you are committed to the human endeavor. I cannot ally myself with such a purely negative goal as avoidance of suffering. Suffering is a chance you have to take by the fact of being alive. I repeat, *Buddhism is not for the West*. We must evolve our own solutions."

The candor of these letters is refreshing. Burroughs frequently growls about the things he doesn't like, but he rarely complains or seeks to rectify them; he insists to Ginsberg that his humanity depends upon never denying what it is he suffers from. In this respect, he resembles Rimbaud. In *Illuminations*, Rimbaud posed a crucial question: "Can man reach ecstasy in destruction and be rejuvenated by cruelty?" A host of 20th century writers—Artaud, Camus, Genet, and Mailer—have formulated responses to that question, with varying degrees of credibility. Burroughs, and certainly Genet, are the only ones to have achieved a breakthrough—to fit the rhetoric of their prose with the circumstances of their lives; to devise a literary technique that communicates, without sentiment or contrition, the nihilism of their vision.

Polarized from American society

by the twin gorgons of homosexuality and addiction, Burroughs's position is not so much defiant as it is matter-of-fact; his real rebellion comes in his language, the livid prose of *Naked Lunch* and other works. Nothing in these letters suggests that he secretly longs for acceptance by the society he despises. Burroughs is an incorrigible outsider; by comparison, Ginsberg and Kerouac are soft and effete. Whereas they bemoan the plight of the artist in a materialistic society and leak hints of sentimental yearnings for reconciliation, Burroughs, with each stroke of the pen, distances himself further, widens the moat and restocks it with the crocodiles of obscenity and outrage.

There are moments in these letters when Burroughs views with astonishing tranquility the horror of the world. The vision is dour and apocalyptic—the same chilling, hallucinatory vision that has haunted western literature since Baudelaire. For Burroughs, the world is an arena in which the one renewable resource is the potential for human suffering. From this fate there is no reprieve, no easing of the burden through love or professional accomplishments or altruistic endeavors. Like junk—another implacable reality—relief from such an epistemological vision can only be achieved momentarily through yet another dose of its horrors. And so Burroughs, writing to Ginsberg in October 1956, can say with a kind of grim equanimity: "It's like the sight of someone about to flip or someone full of paranoid hate excites me. I want to see what will happen if they really wig. I want to crack them wide open and feed on the wonderful soft stuff that will ooze out. When an Arab looks at me with insane hate, I hope maybe he will come apart for me so I can see the bare bones of human process spill right out under the Moroccan blue sky . . ."

It requires a pronounced degree of estrangement from conventional western values to utter a statement like this; or is it a matter of blasting through the layers of cant and hypocrisy that muffle those values to tap the truth at their core? We all know the sort of world we live in, and so isn't it better to acknowledge the gruesome aspects—to identify oneself, like Genet, with the thief and the sinner—than to deny or retreat from them? Such statements set Burroughs apart from any other

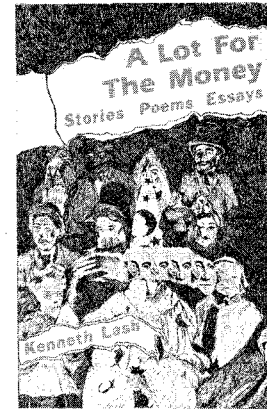
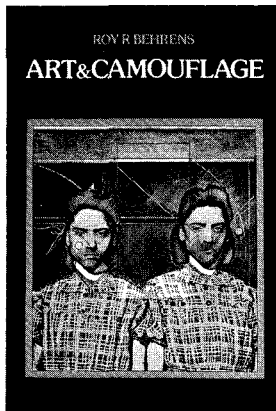
American writer of his generation, with the exception of Paul Bowles. Burroughs asks no quarter and gives none; traditional humanist standards are incapable of interpreting him. He breaks all the rules and transgresses all the boundaries.

At the heart of these utterances lies a truth that in bygone times we called a "moral vision" and that today we call . . . I don't know *what* we call it: perception, hunch, notion, insight—confirmation? In an age of dissolving standards, it is almost impossible to dignify with a resonant title. For all their aptness, Burroughs's insights strike the consciousness like a brick hurled against a cinderblock wall. The sound is hollow, sickening, repetitive. After awhile, it grows dull. This is especially true of his fiction; inflated by parody and hyperbole, it drones on and on like the static crackle of a dying star. Perhaps the perception of something as dull as evil can only be rendered in a single key, repeated *ad nauseam*, a flat, monotonous sound that no amount of rhetoric can modulate. Dante and Milton constructed artifacts that depicted man's search for spiritual perfection, and the appeal of these works today lies in the tension and suspense, the hope and yearning, inherent in the nature of the quest. With Burroughs, we have no such dialectic. Unlike Dante or Milton, the given in his work is not God's glory versus mankind's paltriness, but the irrefutable fact of human debasement in a godless universe.

These letters are important because they give us Burroughs without the elaborate scaffolding of his fiction. "Why do I always parody?" he asks Ginsberg. "Neither in life nor in writing can I achieve complete sincerity . . . *except* in parody and moments of profound discouragement." This is a bit of hyperbole, too; in fact, the opposite is true. We get more of Burroughs the man from these letters than we ever get from his novels. The voice here is not that of the Hyde Park orator but that of the person, wry and grumbly at times, peevish and querulous too, but always direct, with an admirable addiction to honesty. If the voice sounds distant and remote, it is also strangely comforting. A certain heroism is revealed in these letters. Behind the barker of fantastic tales lies a man worth knowing.

—Conger Beasley, Jr.

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THE FINALISTS:

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Highwire
Louisiana Life
Monthly Detroit
Portfolio
Progressive Architecture
Washington Journalism Review

(100,000 to 400,000 circulation)

American Photographer
Animal Kingdom
Cricket
Harper's
Outside

(400,000 to 1,000,000 circulation)

Forbes
Fortune
Nursing 82
Science 82
Travel & Leisure

(Over 1,000,000 circulation)

Life
National Geographic
Self
Seventeen
Time

PUBLIC SERVICE

California
Corrections
Foreign Affairs
The New Yorker
Philadelphia
Texas Monthly

DESIGN

Forbes
Metropolitan Home
New York
Science 82
Time

FICTION

Antaeus
The Atlantic
Esquire
The New Yorker
The North American Review

REPORTING

Institutional Investor
National Journal
Reader's Digest
Texas Monthly
Time
The Washingtonian

ESSAYS & CRITICISM

The American Lawyer
The Nation
Newsweek
The New Yorker
Time
Vogue

SINGLE-TOPIC ISSUE

American Photographer
Ebony
IEEE Spectrum
Money
New York

SERVICE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

High Wire
Money
Southern Living
Sunset
The Washingtonian

AWARD FOR GENERAL EXCELLENCE

Life
Science 82
Harper's
Louisiana Life

AWARD FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Foreign Affairs

AWARD FOR DESIGN

New York

AWARD FOR FICTION

The North American Review

AWARD FOR REPORTING

Institutional Investor

AWARD FOR ESSAYS & CRITICISM

American Lawyer

AWARD FOR SINGLE-TOPIC ISSUE

IEEE Spectrum

AWARD FOR SERVICE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

Sunset



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